WAR HORSE . . . by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

15¢

Adventure

A POPULAR PUBLICATION

OCTOBER

OUTLAW
by FRANK GRUBER

BAPTISM OF FIRE
by GEORGES SURDEZ

W C. TUTTLE · F.R. BUCKLEY

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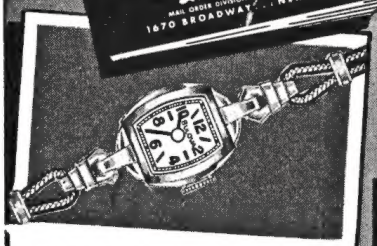

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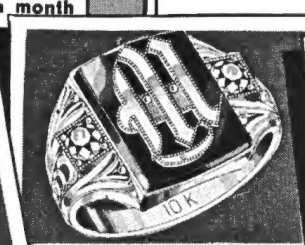

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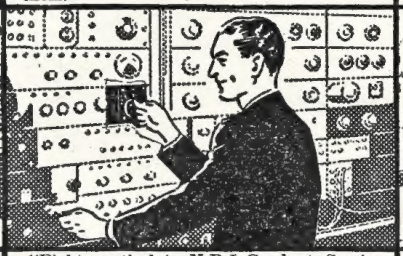

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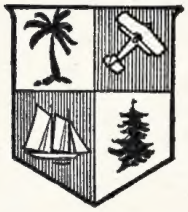

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 103, No. 6 for October, 1940 Best of New Stories

Outlaw (1st part of 4) . . . . . FRANK GRUBER 6
Hard for a soldier after a war to settle down to the ways of peace—harder still it was in the Old West, where a man kept on carrying a gun.

War Horse (a novelette) . . . . . FAIRFAX DOWNEY 28
Two death-locked armies mass for the last big push, and the caissons go rolling along the Soissons road. The daughter of battle, mare of the A. E. F., carries her master to war.

Gambler's Dollar . . . . . W. C. TUTTLE 71
The trouble popped when the sheriff of Mojave Wells woke up with a hangover, after he hadn't been drinking—and found the jail was empty.

Baptism of Fire . . . . . GEORGES SURDEZ 80
Wounded, afraid, a soldier of France heard above the shells a voice from long-ago Alsace—"Your country, boy—you must stick to it when times are bad. . . ."

Sailor Beware . . . . . BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR 90
The fog came down off Barney Bay, and the wind and the sea were the only law, and on the heaving bosom of the old gray widow-maker anything can happen—including murder.

Teacher of Sword-Play . . . . . F. R. BUCKLEY 100
He knew little of life, nothing of death except what he'd read in books—until the day Luigi Caradosso gave him sword and dagger and told him to see the color of a tyrant's blood.

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Cover by Walter Baumhofer

Headings by Hamilton Greene, I. B. Hazelton and Peter Kuhlhoff

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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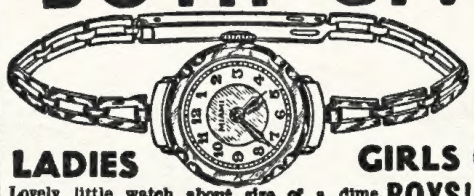

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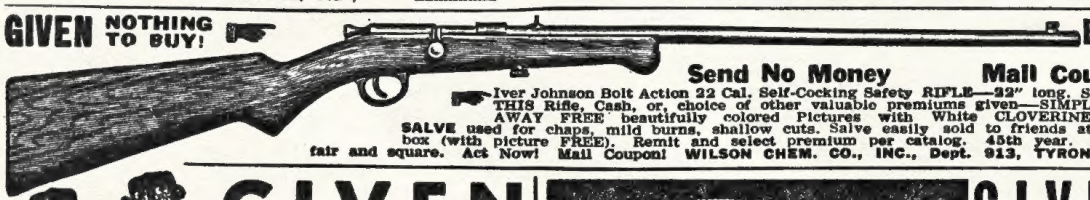

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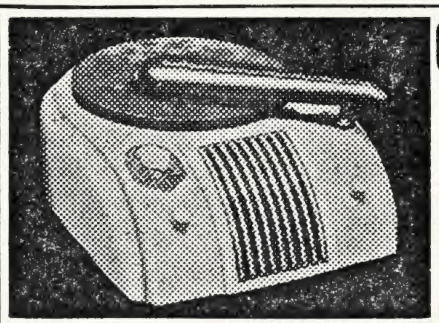

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

"Wanted information of J. C. Johnson, born in Cairo, Ill., July 24, 1902; attented Elmwood School. Father was a steamboat man, Christian or Crispen Johnson. Write H. L. Beasley, mgr., The Hobby Shop, Centralia, Ill."

About eleven years ago I knew Ned Dixie in Belmont, Mass. Anyone having any knowledge of his whereabouts kindly contact Robert G. Lindsay, 133 Fenno St., Revere, Mass.

David Delauie, pronounced De-law-ya—was in Marines at Great Lakes in 1923-24; discharged in Quantico, Va.; worked as bridge riveter; was going to Utica, N. Y. when discharged. Would like to hear from him. L. A. Pratt, 3512 Lake Park Av., Chicago, Ill.

Clayton Isabel and Red Lewis, write me at once—Bill LaRue, Parrottsville, Tenn.

Would like to hear from Kenneth Sublette, Robert Livingston, Ben Covington, the Gorman Brothers, or anyone from Lytton Springs, 1914-15; also Fuzzy Bell, Carl McLain, Eldridge Metzger or anyone from George Jr. Republic, Chino, Cal. Also anyone from the 15th Regiment Guard Co. (aviation) 1920. "Soapy" Leonard was the company commander. Sheppard was the "C O". Jimmy Tarpley, 1530 Victory Blvd., Glendale, Cal.

I should like to contact any of the translators who served with me in the Bureau of Naval Intelligence (Cable Censorship) at 20 Broad St., New York City, during the first World War.—G. M. Patison, P. O. Box 128, Hollywood, Cal.

Have two brothers and two sisters, a mother past seventy-five, a dad of eighty-two. All interested in the attempt to contact a missing brother. Information wanted of George Verner Richards, born on farm in Monroe Co., Carleton, Mich., age 54, missing from Ann Arbor, Mich., since 1923. Was successful garage operator. May be in Canada, most likely in garage, or gas and oil business at this time. Was a reader of *Adventure* and may see this. Anyone knowing will please advise Vern's brother. Address Winn V. Richards, Old Moscow Tavern Antique Shop, Moscow, Mich.

In 1914, I located a long lost brother through "Lost Trails." Will you run the following for me?—Roscoe. I. Smith born in Nickerson, Kansas, March 12, 1889. Sometimes known as Art Smith or Frank Smith. Please write your brother Harry C. Smith, 3820 Flower St., Bell, Calif. My father is very old now and while we did find one brother through your magazine in 1914 and have stayed in touch ever since, the one lost sheep means more to my father than the others.

John Beardsley and Marion French, if alive, please communicate with 66 Wall St., Pontiac, Mich.; an old friend from Camp Columbia, Cuba, would like to hear from you. L. H. Harvey.

Louis Sequer, last heard from in Hericourt Hte, Saone, France. If any word notify Private Robert Owen, Company L—5th Infantry, Canal Zone.

Guy C. Pinney, Conneautville, Pa., R. D. 4, wants word of his son Roscoe Clarance Pinney, who left Sheridan, Wyo., in 1919 or 1920. He enlisted in the 81st Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force, Sept. 1915, served in the First Brigade Co. F.A., France, discharged July 12, 1919. Five ft. 11 in. tall, fair, blue eyes, now 43 years old, left-handed. Last heard from in Santa Barbara, Calif.

George Richardson, woolsorter—served apprenticeship at "Willey's" in England. Came to So. Barre, Mass., in 1924, returned to England, went to New Zealand, Tasmania and Australia. Last heard from him at South Melbourne, Victoria, March 2, 1931, was leaving within a week for Broken Hill, New South Wales. Word appreciated by Carlo Fossett, P.O. Box 264, Barre, Mass.

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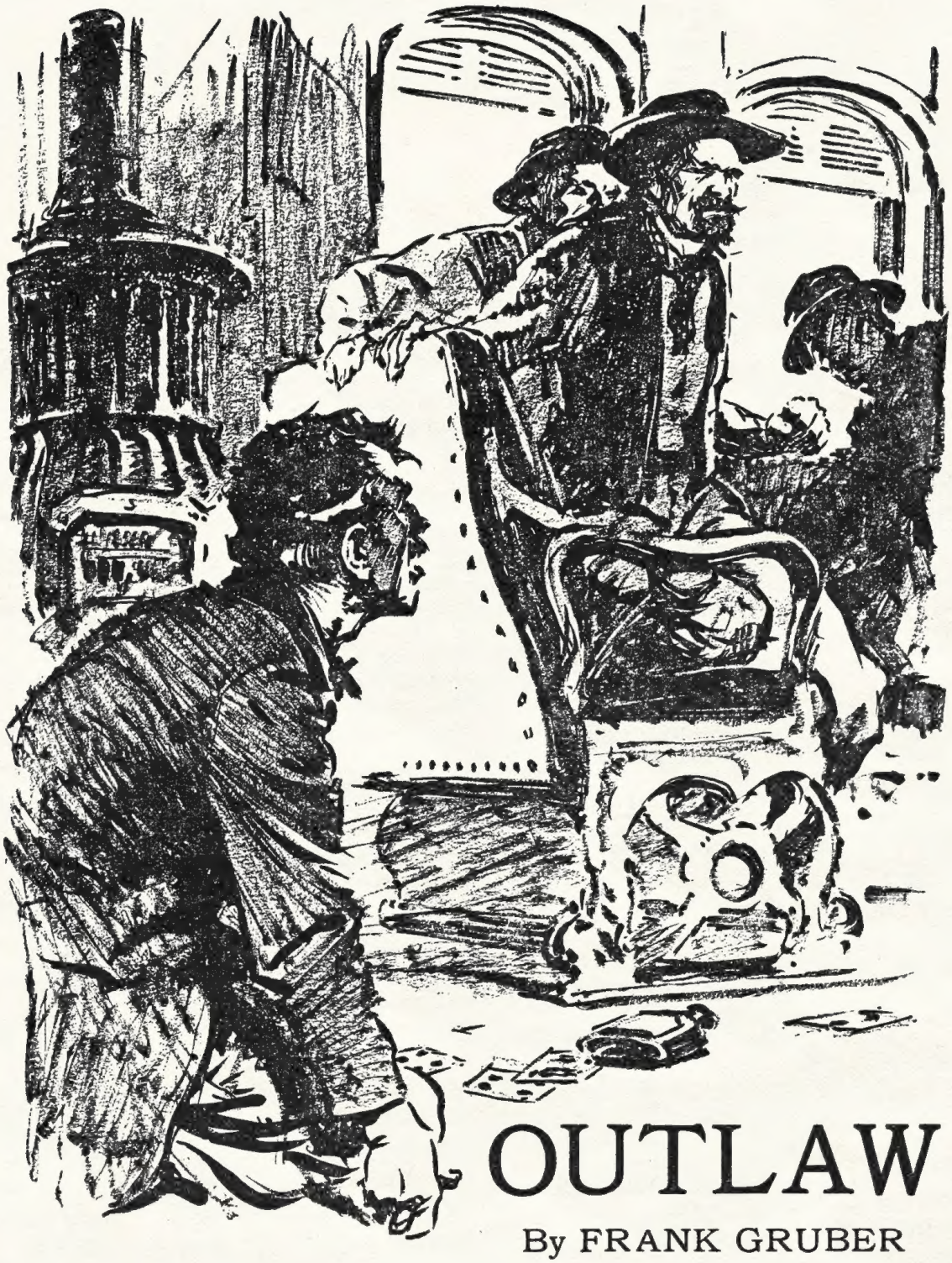


OUTLAW

By FRANK GRUBER

IN THE front of the coach a half dozen men were playing poker. The conductor had remonstrated with them before the train reached Lexington, but they had intimidated him with verbal abuse so that he did not come back into the car until the train had stopped at Lexington and gone on again. Some passengers had got on and the conductor was compelled to come through the car and collect the tickets.

He found that the poker game had spread from the two seats into the aisle and that flat bottles were now being openly passed around the group. Furthermore, the bottles had been passed

"Get off the train now. You, Pike—and all the rest of you!"

around for some time, for the gamblers had become boisterous.

Tight-lipped, the conductor tried to squeeze past one of the players, who was crouched on his haunches in the aisle. The man turned on him savagely. "Who you pushing, sour-face?"

"I didn't mean to push you," the conductor said in a low tone. "But I must get through. You're blocking the aisle."

The card player caught hold of one of his companions and pulled himself to his feet. "What if I am, you damned old—!"

In a nearby seat, a spinsterish woman exclaimed: "Conductor, I won't stand for such language. I demand that you put that man off this train. And that you stop that gambling. If you don't, I'll report you to your superior."

The abusive passenger turned wobbily and searched for the complainant. His eyes came to rest upon a girl in her late teens, who sat in the seat directly behind the one in which the card game was going on. His scowl left his face and he leered drunkenly: "Well, my pretty, so *you* want me chucked off the train, huh? Is that being sociable to a neighbor, I ask you?"

The girl looked out of the window.

One of the other players said peevishly: "Come on, Pike. If you're going to play, let's play."

The conductor tried again to pass Pike. The big man pushed him back, absentmindedly. His eyes on the girl who was staring out of the window, he lurched forward.

"I was talking to you, pretty face.

Why the hell don't you answer me?"

Halfway down the car, Jim Chapman got up. Pale, partly from his long siege of illness and partly from cold anger, he looked even younger than his twenty years. His boots clicked on the wooden floor of the car as he walked forward.

When he was six feet from Pike, he said, "Get out of this car, you drunken loafer!"

Pike's eyes popped wide and his mouth opened, showing blackened, tobacco-stained teeth.

"What was that?" he exclaimed. "Was you talkin' to *me,* you young pup?"

Chapman took a step forward, raised his right foot and planted it in Pike's stomach. It was a shove, rather than a kick, but it was a hard shove.

Pike went back. The conductor, trying to get out of the way, tripped and hit the floor on his back. Pike stumbled over him and went down on top of him.

He began cursing luridly. The other card players yelled excitedly and began squirming and shoving in their cramped quarters. Pike got around on his hands and knees and looked up at the youth who had kicked him down.

"You—" he began and then stopped.

THE Navy Colt in Chapman's hand was partly depressed to cover Pike, but it could easily be swung up and sidewise should any of Pike's card-playing companions take up the challenge.

The conductor got to his feet behind Pike. Chapman said to him: "Stop the train."

White-faced, the conductor reached up and pulled the signal cord. The sudden braking of the train threw the different card players against one another. Pike went back on his haunches.

Chapman braced for the sudden stop.

"All right," he said, crisply. "Get off the train now. You, Pike, and all the rest of you."

"Hey!" blustered one of the other card players "I wasn't doin' nothin'. You can't make me get—"

The Navy Colt swung to the right. "I said, get off."

There was no further argument. The several card players departed hurriedly from the train. They even left their cards behind. Chapman nodded to the conductor, who gave the signal cord two quick jerks and as the wheels started to turn again, he flicked back the tail of his sack-cloth coat and slipped the Navy Colt in a holster, fastened to a belt buckled high about his waist.

Then he walked back to his seat. He did not look at the girl who had been accosted by Pike.

In the back of the car several passengers began talking about the incident. The conductor, his poise somewhat recovered, walked with his swinging gait back to where Chapman was staring moodily out of the window.

"Mister," he said, "I'm mighty grateful for what you did. That Pike fellow is a bad one He's traveled with me before and he's always made plenty of trouble."

Chapman turned briefly from the window.

"It's all right," he said shortly.

The conductor frowned at the rebuff, then shrugged and continued down the train.

Chapman turned back to stare at the Missouri farmland. In just a little while, now, he would be home. The thought should have thrilled him. Back there in New York it had seemed like a good idea, but now—he didn't know.

Things were different. Amnesty had been granted by the government, but a mere proclamation couldn't change what was in people's hearts. No war is as bitter as a civil war. Out here, in Missouri, it had gone too far.

Chapman knew. He had followed the black flag. He had ridden with Quantrell and Bloody Bill Anderson. He had screamed abysmal hatred and defiance, had given no mercy and asked none. He had sacked and pillaged and done the things that had caused even the desperate border folk to tremble.

And he had been too young.

His youth had been blurred by death and desolation, his senses dulled by gunfire and the anguished screams of the dying. He had seen too much blood.

The war was over, yes. For some. But

how about Jim Chapman and those others like him—those of the damned, who had worn neither the Blue or the Gray? They had been included in the general amnesty, but what of the amnesty in the hearts of those who had suffered from them and feared them—and were now the victors?

And what of the spark that had been created by it all and still glowed in Jim Chapman's heart? It had flamed just a few minutes ago. He had thought it dead.

THE seat beside Chapman creaked. He turned to glance at the heavy-set man in his middle forties who had seated himself beside Chapman.

"That was good work, stranger," the man said. "Took nerve."

He cleared his throat and took an engraved card from the pocket of a brocaded vest.

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am Alan Vickers."

Chapman took the card from his seatmate. He looked at it and read:

VICKERS INTERNATIONAL DETECTIVE AGENCY

Chicago New York London

Alan Vickers

Chapman looked thoughtfully at Alan Vickers.

"How do you do, sir," he said.

Vickers inhaled heavily. "You've heard of our firm. I don't mind telling you that I'm on my way to Kansas City, where we're opening a new branch office. Do you live out this way, sir?"

Chapman nodded. "Yes. That is, I used to live around here. Guess I will again. I haven't been around for some time."

"Ah! A soldier, eh? Let me see, I imagine you've been ill. In a hospital. I'm sorry to hear that. You must have had quite a siege."

"It wasn't so bad," Chapman replied.

No, the hospital hadn't been so bad. He'd only been there two months. It was the long convalescence that had worn him down. The wound had not healed. It still hurt him now when the weather was damp.

"As I was saying," Alan Vickers continued, "I'm opening a branch in Kansas City. I don't mind saying that I was impressed by your performance of a few minutes ago and I was wondering—well, I'm a man of quick judgment. Would you be interested in going to work for me?"

Chapman blinked. "You mean become a detective?"

"Yes, of course. You're younger than most of our operators, but age and experience isn't everything. Much depends on the man himself. Your performance—well, sir, I think you'd make an excellent detective. What do you say?"

Chapman stared at him. "But you don't know anything about me. You haven't even—I haven't even told you my name." He paused a moment. "It's Jim Chapman."

Alan Vickers held out a thick, muscular hand. "Glad to make your acquaintance, Chapman."

Chapman took the detective's hand briefly, then released it and leaned away.

"I wasn't a Union soldier, Mr. Vickers," he said.

Vickers seemed a little disconcerted for a moment. He coughed once or twice. "Well, the war's over. And after all, we are opening this branch in a more or less Southern community. I don't think that should make any difference, Chapman. Might be an excellent idea, in fact, to have a man with the old Southern viewpoint, you might say. But don't give me your answer now. If you decide that you'd like to try it, come over and see me in Kansas City. I'll be there for two weeks."

Chapman nodded slowly. The conductor came through the car from the rear, calling, "Independence, next stop."

"I'll think it over, Mr. Vickers," Chapman said. He got up and reached to the rack overhead for a rather worn carpet-bag. "I'm glad to have made your acquaintance. I get off here."

Vickers got up to let Chapman out into the aisle. He shook hands again. "I'll look forward to seeing you in Kansas City, then."

The train was slackening speed for the Independence station. Ahead, passengers were getting ready to leave. As Chapman passed the girl for whom he had interceded, she suddenly turned and said in a voice only loud enough for him:

"Thank you."

Chapman turned briefly, bowed in acknowledgment and pushed ahead. The girl was getting off, too.

CHAPTER II

MARKED FOR TROUBLE

INDEPENDENCE had grown. Captured by Price in '61, purged by Jennison and garrisoned by Union and Confederate in turn, the town had nevertheless swelled tremendously. Here and there blackened rubbles that had once been houses still dotted the streets, but on the whole, the town showed few scars. Most of the buildings were new, built of lumber and painted.

There were still plenty of blue uniforms on the street, for the town was headquarters for the provost marshal of the district.

Horses lined the hitch-rail on the main thoroughfare. Farm wagons were scattered along the street and men and women walked the wooden sidewalks, going from store to store or standing in small groups, talking.

Chapman walked slowly along the street until he came to the Hoffman House, before which stood a stage that seemed about ready to depart. He picked out a man he judged to be the driver.

"Can you tell me if there's a stage soon for Freedom?"

"You bet," said the man, "This is her. And she leaves right smart now. Just waitin' for folks from the train. Cost you fifty cents. Let me stick your carpetbag in the boot."

Chapman surrendered his bag, paid the driver a half dollar and climbed into the Butterfield coach. There were two men already inside, one a farmer, judging by his rough butternut suit and the other a business.

After Chapman had been seated the driver opened the door again on Chapman's side.

"Watch your step, Miss," he said. "We 're off in a minute."

The girl from the train climbed into the coach and sat down directly opposite Chapman. The man he had taken for a commercial traveler exclaimed: "Why, Miss Comstock. Back from St. Louis already?"

"Yes," replied the girl. "How do you do, Mr. Slocum."

"Just fine, Miss Evelyn, just fine. Saw your father yesterday. He didn't say anything about your coming back."

"He doesn't know I'm coming. I'm surprising him."

Overhead, the stage driver was shouting to his horses. He cracked his whip and the stagecoach began to move. Almost immediately one of the wheels struck a hole in the street and Evelyn Comstock lurched forward in her seat. Chapman's hand went out instinctively to steady her, but she did not lose her balance.

For an instant her eyes met his. There was a quizzical expression in them, almost a question. He turned his face to look out of the window, at the store fronts flashing by.

Slocum began talking to the girl about her father. Then, suddenly, the man in butternut exclaimed: "Say, ain't you the Chapman boy?"

Jim Chapman twitched. Beside him he felt Slocum move.

Chapman looked at the farmer and lifted his hands in an unobtrusive gesture. "Yes," he said, "I'm Jim Chapman."

"I thought so!" exclaimed the farmer, triumphantly. "You was on'y a boy the last time I saw you, but you're a dead ringer for your older brother, Tom, him that was—"

He coughed suddenly.

The man beside Chapman said, "Jim Chapman! Yes, I remember you, too. Didn't you go down to Mexico at the close of the war?"

The farmer across from Chapman was suddenly making signals to the man beside Chapman. Chapman intercepted them and his nostrils flared a little.

"Yes, I went down to Mexico with Shelby. Yes, I rode with Anderson. And my brother was killed at Lone Jack, when he was with Quantrell. And—the war's over. Or isn't it?"

"Sure, sure. Certainly," Henry Slocum assured Chapman. "Sorry, didn't mean anything out of the way."

But he had meant something. He might just as well have put in into words. Chapman had been a guerrilla, not a soldier. He'd gone to Mexico at the conclusion of the war, because he'd been afraid to come home. Defeated soldiers could return, but not guerillas. That was what Slocum had meant.

Chapman knew that the girl's eyes were on him, but he stared stonily out of the window. He saw the countryside passing by, heard the driver yelling at his horses. And he was fully aware that he had killed whatever further conversation might have gone on during the nine-mile trip to Freedom. No one inside the coach spoke another word.

When it finally pulled up beside the Freedom Hotel Chapman was the first one out of the coach. He got his own carpetbag from the boot and turned away, without further glance at any of his erstwhile traveling companions.

FREEDOM had changed, too. The square that had seen both the Blue and the Gray now had a small howitzer planted in the center with a stack of cannonballs beside it. The local company—the local company of Union men—had taken it at Vicksburg.

Chapman had been here during the war. But even then the streets had not been as busy as they were now. Clumps of men stood about on the sidewalks and even in the street, talking excitedly. It was not until he had overheard a snatch of excited chatter, that Chapman realized that this scene was not ordinary for Freedom.

Something had just happened, something of moment. Chapman stopped at the fringe of a crowd and listened.

"Seventy thousand dollars! She'll never stand that. Kiss your money goodby."

"Dirty thieves," snarled another voice. "Don't they know the war's over!"

Chapman caught hold of a man's arm. "What happened? I just got off the stage."

"Bank's been held up," snapped the man. "It happened only an hour ago. They got everything."

"Who're they?"

"The bank robbers. Those damned—" The man winced suddenly and choked off the words. A strange pallor came to his face and he sidled away from Chapman.

Chapman stared at the man, then gripped his carpetbag firmer and turned away. He had gone less than a dozen feet, when the crowd he had left began to rumble. He shot a glance over his shoulder and saw every member of the group staring at him. A chill seeped through him.

He had been recognized.

He continued up the street, walking with deliberate tread. And as he walked the spark within him glowed, fanned by resentment.

The bank had been held up. By—they were afraid to voice their suspicions. By *them*. The men of the black flag. The guerrillas. The men who did not know the war was over, who would be blamed for everything that happened for years to come.

Chapman had been one of them and they had recognized him. He had grown up around here. They had seen him during the war. At first they had cheered and helped him and those who rode with him. Then, later, they had cursed them.

Well, let them look. Let them mutter and mumble. That was as far as they would go. It was only two years since the mention of the very word *guerrilla* had been enough to send them quaking, to their holes. They wouldn't have forgotten so soon.

Chapman continued up the street of Freedom. The town was smaller than Independence, but it boasted a college, on the hill at the north edge of town. It was late afternoon when Chapman swung up the road and students were coming from their classes. Some of them were as old as Chapman, some older.

They had taken time out from their studies to win—and lose—a war. Now some who had faced each other on the battlefields were classmates.

A man came out of a house, started to pass Chapman, then stopped and exclaimed unbelievingly: "Jim Chapman!"

"Hello, Lon," Chapman said carelessly as if he had just seen Lon Rader the day before. He continued in his stride, leaving the other staring after him.

Passing the college on the hill, he turned and looked down on Freedom. His forehead creased for a moment and his mouth twisted crookedly. Then he turned and looked ahead, down the dusty road to the north.

He had ridden up this hill four years ago, in September of '63. Sixteen he had been and he was going to war. War as it was fought in Missouri. The charge at dawn, the quick thrust in the night, the yelling and screaming of the men about him, the terrible staccato of the Navy Colt, the bark and whine of the Sharp's rifle.

WAR. Skulking and sniping. Flight and pursuit. The torch and the revolver. Guerrilla warfare. No quarter given and none expected. The black flag in Lawrence, pillars of smoke and the blood running in the streets.

It was over now. They had lost and they had paid for it. Appomattox was two years back and Jim Chapman was just coming home. There had been too much to forget quickly. They still remembered.

A mile from Freedom he saw the gutted remains of what had been Abe Coulton's fine brick house. Nearby was a log cabin, with gray mud filling the chinks between the logs. A bearded, one-armed man peered out of the door of the cabin, drew in his head, then popped it out again. He stared at Chapman and finally spoke.

"Good Lord—Jim Chapman." He came hesitatingly to the road, but he could not hold out his hand in greeting, because he had no right hand.

Chapman said, "Hello, Abe." He looked past Colton at the ruins of Colton's home and he looked where Colton's strong right arm had been.

"We heard you was killed in Mexico," Colton said. "Your sister Annie—"

"My sister?" Chapman said, with quickening tone. "She's—"

"Oh no, she's fine. Ed, too. I was just going to say I was talking to her not so long ago and she hadn't heard from you. *She* never said you were dead. Always claimed you'd come back some day, when it was—when things was different."

"And are they different, Abe?"

The bitterness came to Abe Colton's eyes. The bitterness of his ruined home, his lost arm, the thwarted years ahead of him.

"It's hell, Jim. Sometimes I think it ain't worth goin' on. If it weren't for the kids—" He averted his eyes for a moment, then laughed. "You came through Freedom?"

Chapman nodded "Yes. I heard. I got off the Independence stage and saw the crowds standing around. I asked somebody what had happened and he started to tell me—and got tongue-tied when he recognized me."

"They try anything, Jim?"

"What should they try? I'd just got off the stage."

"That's what you said, but—"

"But what, Abe?"

Colton fidgeted. "I don't know anything about it, Jim. Only Titus Watt passed by a little while ago and he said there was eight or ten of them. None of them was identified, but the talk's that it was some of the boys."

"The talk's not very loud," Chapman said bluntly. "It's only whispers."

"Sure, sure," Colton agreed. "Well, s'pose you want to get along home."

"Yes," said Chapman. "Yes, I guess so."

Beyond Colton's the road turned to the east and ran for a winding mile through scraggly forest. Then there was a break in which stood a two-story frame house that had survived the war years. Across the road and a hundred yards further ahead was Simon Rain's farm, a log cabin and four or five acres of cleared land. Another half mile of woods then and Jasper Hobson's farm was on the right, a recently painted

white frame house, to which rooms had been added from time to time, so that the house was of a peculiar shape.

Directly across the road, a lane turned off and wound for almost a quarter mile in, to a little clearing, with a knoll in the center of it. On the knoll was a weathered, unpainted frame house of two rooms and attic.

From the edge of the lane, Chapman regarded the house. He put down his carpetbag.

The front door of the house was open and smoke came thinly from the chimney. A few chickens scratched in the dirt to the side and to the left a little way a four-year-old boy was playing with a very young, spotted-puppy.

Chapman had never seen the child.

"So this is it," he said, half-aloud and as if to retort to his comment, a woman came to the door. She saw Jim Chapman fifty feet away and stiffened. There was no recognition in her eyes.

LEAVING his carpetbag on the grass, Chapman swung toward the house. Anne would now be twenty-two. She looked thirty. She had borne a child through the black days of Order No. 11. Ed, her husband, had been with Hood in Tennessee.

"Hello," Chapman said, as he walked toward the house. "Hello, Annie—"

"Oh my God," whispered the woman in the doorway. It's—it's Jimmy!"

He stopped a few feet from the door and looked awkwardly at his sister. They had always been very much attached to one another, Tom and Annie and he. But that had been years ago. Tom was dead now. And Jim had been away for four years.

Anne said, "Jim, I don't—" and then she stepped down from the door stoop and came and put her arms about him. He held her and felt her body tremble. To break the awkwardness of the moment, he twisted his head and said: "Don't tell me that shaver there is my nephew!"

She pushed away from him, dabbed at her eyes and smiled through tears. "Tommy!" she cried. "Tommy, come and meet your Uncle Jim."

"I ain't got a gun with me," he mumbled.

Tommy left his puppy and came forward, walking with childish dignity. He put both hands in his overall pockets, took them out and wiped them along his thighs, then gravely held out the right hand.

"Hello, Uncle Jim," he said

Chapman stooped and caught up the boy and tossed him high in the air. He caught him and laughed. "So you're Thomas Taylor, Jr."

Anne Chapman Taylor ran to the edge of the house, put her hands to her mouth and called: "Ed! Come here. Jim's home. Jim, my brother!"

Ed Taylor, unshaven and perspiring from his ploughing, came around the corner of the house.

"Jim," he said, "it's good to see you. Annie always said you'd show up some fine day."

Chapman shook his brother-in-law's hand and pounded him on the back. Tom Taylor yelled in glee.

"I'm glad to be here, Ed," Chapman said. "I didn't know I was so homesick until I stood out there a few minutes ago and looked at this old shack. You're looking well, Ed."

"Oh, I'm all right, Jim. A touch of malaria now and then, but I can't complain. I came through in fine shape."

"My daddy was a sergeant," piped up Ed Taylor's young son, "and he could lick any two Yankees in the army. He could even lick General Sherman, he could."

Ed Taylor smiled at his son. Then he said, "Annie, Jim probably hasn't eaten—"

"Of course!" Chapman's sister cried. "I've just finished baking bread, too. I'll fix up something in a jiffy." She darted into the house.

Chapman put down his young nephew and followed his sister into the house. He looked around the warm kitchen, at the big stone fireplace and the scrubbed board table and chairs. He sat down on one of the chairs and sighed heavily.

"It's great!"

Ed Taylor took out a pouch of tobacco and a corncob pipe. He offered the pouch to Chapman, who shook his head.

"I never really got started."

Anne Taylor was bustling over the cast-iron stove. "Jim, tell us where you've all been. We know you went to Mexico with General Shelby. What was it like down there?"

Chapman's face clouded with unpleasant reminiscence. "Sand, Annie. Sand and sun—and a lot of other things."

"Fighting, Jim?" asked Ed Taylor.

"Fighting, Ed. Shelby wanted to throw in with Juarez and the Indian didn't trust him. Well, we couldn't go back, so we went to Maximilian. He was seven hundred miles away and Juarez dogged us every mile. A lot of the boys stayed there in the sand. Of course, you know that Maximilian wouldn't take us either. Not as a body. A lot of us enlisted in his army, though, when Shelby saw he was licked and disbanded the outfit. I stopped a bullet long before they got Max."

"Bad?" asked Taylor.

Chapman looked at his sister's back and shook his head. "No—not bad. I've been in New York. And Chicago for a while. There's a city that's coming along. It'll beat St. Louis some day, probably New York. If they ever get their streets out of the mud. But what've you been doing, Ed?"

Ed Taylor spread out his hands. "Nothing, Jim, but trying to make a few crops grow. I stick to home pretty much. The war's over as far as I'm concerned. No use looking for trouble."

Chapman looked thoughtfully at his brother-in-law. "The Yanks are pretty tough?"

"Not the soldiers. Well, you expect it from them. But the Dutch, and the others—I guess they'd like all Southern people to get out of the county and let them grab what's ours. Our horses and cattle and farms. I mean, it's just as well not to go shouting you're a Confederate."

"ED," Chapman said bluntly, "the Freedom bank was held up this afternoon. I suppose you've heard—"

Ed Taylor gasped.

Anne whirled from the stove. "Jim, you weren't—"

"No," Chapman replied quickly. "It happened about an hour before I got to Freedom. But the town was seething when I got there. They seem to think it was the boys."

Anne exclaimed bitterly. "I knew it. I've been expecting something like that to happen. Clem Tancred and that loud-mouthed Billy Bligh."

"Clem Tancred's back?" Chapman asked. "And Billy!"

Ed Taylor nodded. "Clem came back quite awhile ago. Dan, his brother, is still away, however. Supposed to be in Texas, or somewhere down there, Maybe it's the Indian Nations."

"That's a good place for him," Anne snapped.

"I always liked the Tancreds," Chapman said. "Especially Clem. He left us after Lawrence. Went with Price into Arkansas and Louisiana. How is he, Ed?"

"Bigger than ever. He came back in a Confederate uniform. A captain. Of course there are a lot of Tancreds around here, but if what you say's true—"

"The bank part of it's true. I don't know anything about the rest of it. As a matter of fact, I stopped to ask what'd happened and I got a lot of dirty looks. They seemed to have recognized me."

"Oh, it was them all right," said Anne Taylor, sullenly. "They've been shooting off right along. That Bligh has been in trouble ever since he got back. Some-

one shot at him only last week and he did a lot of talking afterwards."

Ed Taylor looked worried. "You shouldn't say that, Anne. After all, the Cagels would have recognized Billy and Clem, unless—were they masked, Jim?"

"I don't know. But even if they weren't, I don't think the Cagels would openly identify anyone, unless things have changed an awful lot. Who's the sheriff now?"

"A man named Gregg. A Yank. He hasn't pulled his punches any, as far as the boys are concerned. And there's a carpet-bag ruffian named Pike—"

"Pike?" exclaimed Chapman, his eyes glinting.

"Yes. He doesn't hold any office, but he's thick as sorghum with the sheriff."

Anne Taylor finished setting the table. "Pull up your chair, Jim. You can talk when you're through eating."

CHAPTER III

THE LOST ARMY

WHEN he had eaten, it was time for Ed Taylor to perform the evening chores. Chapman went with him. He even tried milking one of the two cows and found his fingers stiff from long disuse. Ed finished Chapman's cow for him.

"You're out of practice, Jim. Well, what do you think of it? Can we make a go of the farm?"

"We?"

"It's your farm, Jim. Your dad wanted it for you and Tom. Me, I just sort of moved in. I never owned anything before and—"

"Don't talk nonsense, Ed. This is your place as much as mine. You've run it and you keep on running it. I may not stick around, anyway."

"You're not going away again, Jim?"

"I don't know. It's not the same. They're pushing the boys around. They can't take that. You heard what happened this afternoon."

"You weren't in on that."

"No, but suppose I'd come home sooner?"

Ed Taylor looked uneasily at Chapman. "I don't know, Jim," he said.

"I don't either. I thought I was over it, yet this same afternoon, on the train, I almost killed a man. A drunken lout named Pike."

"Pike?" gasped Taylor. "Not—"

"I guess he's the same one. I kicked him off the train, just the other side of Independence."

"That was bad, Jim," Taylor said soberly. "You heard me say inside that Pike was Sheriff Gregg's crony."

"I don't think I'd care to meet this Gregg," Chapman said. "I think it's just as well that I pull out again tomorrow. It—it wasn't just what I'd expected, anyway. I feel all hollow inside, Ed."

"Yeah," said Taylor. "I know. I felt that way when I heard about Order No. 11 and I kept writing to Anne and couldn't get any answer. I knew she was having Tommy and all the news from here was bad. It *was* bad, here."

"*We* were responsible for Order No. 11," Chapman said, bitterly. "You'd think we had enough, now. But it seems we haven't. I don't know what makes us like that . . ."

"Jim Chapman!" called a voice from the house. "Let's see your face, Jim. This is Billy!"

Billy Bligh came around the house. He was a year or so older than Jim Chapman. Better filled out, but an inch shorter. He had full mustaches, waxed at the ends, and wore a broadcloth suit and a derby hat.

He grinned in huge delight as he rushed forward and caught Jim Chapman in an embrace. "Jim, you old son of a gun, where've you been? What've you been doing? They couldn't kill you down there, huh?"

"No, they couldn't," laughed Chapman. "But it's a good thing the Mex's didn't see you. You've gotten so fat you'd made an easy mark for them. They couldn't hit anything smaller than the side of a barn."

Billy Bligh stepped back and gazed fondly at Chapman. "I'm sure glad you're back. It's like old times. Clem and Dick—Dick Wood, yeah, he's back—and the Welker boys. We'll make some of these loud talking Yanks step around yet."

"The same old Billy," said Chapman.

"Sooner fight than eat. Didn't you get a bellyful of trouble?"

"You bet! But I've got a big belly. I've been taking them on here, too. Uh, hear what happened in town today? Bunch of fellows held up Old Cagel's bank and stole the money he made selling spoiled beef to the blue-coats." He suddenly caught Jim's eye and motioned him aside.

Ed Taylor saw the signal and picked up his pail of milk and went to the house with it. Billy Bligh held on to Chapman's arm.

He said in a low tone: "Maybe some fellas you know pulled that job, Jim. You can't tell. Maybe I was even in on it. Huh?"

"Maybe so, Billy."

"They own the country, Jim. They robbed us of everything we had and they kick us around now. A Confederate can't hold any office; he can't even vote or get a white man's job. What's he going to do? Starve? Not me, Jim. I like fried chicken sometimes. Say, Clem will be glad to see you. He says his brother Dan is coming back from Texas in a week or so. Pretty soon we'll have a whole bunch around here, eh?"

Chapman nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, but—Billy, the war's over. You can't hold up banks now."

"Why not? They're Yankee banks, ain't they? And, anyway, *we* didn't quit the war. You never signed any parole, did you?"

"Is it necessary, this late?"

Billy Bligh shrugged. "Who gives a damn? There're still more Southern people around here than Yanks. It's only their lousy soldiers that're running things, and their spies that're makin' trouble. That sneakin' neighbor of yours across the road, Hobson, he's a spy. I got my eye on him."

Chapman started slowly toward the house and Billy Bligh walked with him. Anne Taylor came to the doorway and greeted Bligh without warmth.

"Thought you'd be home getting ready for the dance, Billy."

Bligh slapped his thigh. "Yep, that's right. I wouldn't miss a dance for anything. And Jim, you're coming, of course?"

Chapman shook his head. "I haven't done much dancing the last few years."

"All the more reason you ought to come tonight. You've got to come, Jim. The boys'll all be there—Clem and Clarence and Dick. And girls—say, you ought to see some of them that have grown up. Maybe the Comstock girl will be there. Prettiest thing in the county."

Chapman looked past Billy at his sister. "Maybe I will go to the dance. You and Ed going, Anne?"

Anne Taylor shook her head. "I've got out of practice. But—well, maybe we will go. I'll get one of the Hobson children to come stay with Tommy." She turned into the house and Chapman heard her talking to Ed about going to the dance.

"I'll see you tonight, then, Jim," Bligh said enthusiastically. "The dance is at the schoolhouse, you know."

After Bligh had gone, Chapman went into the house. Anne began making an early supper and Ed Taylor got a well-thumbed almanac and began reading. Chapman sat down in an armchair, stretched out his legs and regarded the domestic scene with a contentment he had not known in years.

After awhile, Ed said without looking up from his almanac, "What do you think of Billy, Jim?"

Chapman shrugged. "He's about the same as always. Maybe he talks a little more. But he always did talk a lot."

Anne turned from the stove with a wooden cooking spoon in her hand. "Billy *was* one of those who robbed the bank. I don't like your taking up with him again, Jim. There's trouble coming for Billy and those who travel with him. You don't want to get mixed in it."

"I'm not looking for trouble, Anne. I just want to take things easy for awhile."

"Then keep Billy Bligh away from you. See him tonight, but let him know that you don't put up with his ways. You've had enough trouble. We all have."

Chapman said no more. He was wholly in agreement with his sister's views. He had never particularly liked Billy Bligh, anyway. Clem Tancred,

yes, but Clem was a different sort. If there hadn't been a war Clem would probably have become a preacher or a lawyer. He liked to read.

IT WAS still daylight when Ed Taylor hitched up his team to the heavy farm wagon and the three of them got in to go to the dance at Funk's Grove schoolhouse, two miles from the Taylor farm.

As early as they got there, however, there were already a dozen wagons about and the fiddler could be heard inside the schoolhouse.

A young giant in a tight-fitting suit came over to the wagon and grasped Chapman's hand as he stepped down.

"Jim!"

"Clem Tancred," Chapman said tightly.

"It's been a long time. I'd heard you'd stopped a bad one down in Mexico, but no one seemed to know what'd become of you. It was hell down there, wasn't it?"

Chapman nodded. "I got enough. From now on I'm going to keep—Dick Wood!"

A slight, bandy-legged man of perhaps twenty-two came forward, grinning from ear to ear. While Chapman was pounding Wood on the back, the Welker boys arrived. They were twins, but Clarence outweighed his brother by twenty pounds and was two inches taller. Yet Clark had always been a few feet in front of Clarence in a fight.

When the greetings were over, Dick Wood said to Chapman, "We got a jug out in the woodshed. C'mon and see if you remember how Missouri corn tastes."

Chapman did not care especially to renew the acquaintance with the Missouri jug but he went with the others and when the jug was handed first to him, in honor of his return, he took a swig of it. It burned and made him cough and the others joked about it.

Billy Bligh arrived then, resplendent in Prince Albert and white silk vest. He even wore a silk hat and had his trousers tucked into a fifty dollar pair of hand-stitched riding boots.

He took two healthy pulls on the jug and roared, "Quite a gang of us, now! Like to see those damn' Yanks start anything tonight."

"Mebbe they will," said Clark Welker. "George Pike got here early and he looked like he'd started likkerin' about breakfast time."

"Pike?" asked Chapman. "Who's he?"

Clem Tancred grimaced. "A loud-mouthed corporal from Minnesota. He grabbed Tutt's place and stayed here. Doesn't do any farming, but sells a lot of stock. More than he buys or raises. He's pretty thick with Sheriff Gregg."

Inside the schoolhouse the fiddler and a guitar player struck into a lively dance tune and there was immediate cheering and stamping.

Ed Taylor came to the door of the wood-shed. "Hello, fellows," he said. "Anne wants you to dance the first one with her, Jim."

"Of course. Coming, fellows?"

They trooped into the schoolhouse, already well lighted with wall lamps. Chapman found his sister near the door and moved awkwardly out upon the floor with her. Couples swirled around them. Now and then a man yelled at Chapman or clapped him heartily upon the back.

Anne said: "I wouldn't make too many trips out to the woodshed, Jim."

Chapman chuckled. "Going to look after me, Anne?"

"Maybe you need it. You haven't been around women enough, Jim. Now, there's a nice girl over there, Andrew Miller's oldest girl, Sophie. She's already got her eye on you."

Chapman looked where his sister indicated and had a passing glimpse of a girl of sixteen or seventeen. But his eyes came to rest upon another girl. She wore a velvet dress, cut low at the throat, and her blonde hair was brushed and coiled smoothly upon the back of her neck. She was looking away from Chapman and he caught her profile, so finely chiseled. It was the girl of the train episode.

He said to his sister, "Who is the girl in the green velvet?"

Anne twisted sidewards in his embrace "That—that's Evelyn Comstock. Surprised she came here. Guess old Preston wanted to size up what farmer's mortgage he should foreclose tomorrow. He owns the Comstock bank. It's bigger than the Cagels'. There's her brother over there, Captain Cliff Comstock. And don't forget the captain part. He was on Kirby Smith's staff."

"She isn't dancing," Chapman said.

Anne Taylor looked up sharply at him. "Take your eyes off her, Jim. She only dances with Martin Halliday, who is almost as rich as her father. Something must have kept him, for he ought to be here."

The musicians stopped and the dancers applauded vigorously for an encore. When it began, Chapman saw Pike.

He was standing about eight or ten feet from Evelyn Comstock, flanked by several men whose faces were slightly familiar and had probably been his fellow card players on the train. Pike was glowering at Chapman. When he danced past with his sister, Chapman saw that Pike's face was flushed with anger.

Chapman saw his brother-in-law at the edge of the dance floor and when he came up to him, he surrendered his sister to her husband.

"Out of practice, Anne," he apologized.

Pike was already weaving through the dancers to come to Chapman. When he arrived, he said, "So you're Jim Chapman. Didn't figure I'd see you again."

"You're not much soberer," Chapman retorted curtly.

Pike sneered. "And you're one of these Confederates. I guess they did call themselves Confederates, didn't they? I was at Westport."

"Pike," Chapman said deliberately, "I came home just for a visit. I'm figuring on pulling out of here again in a day or two. But I wouldn't want you to get the idea that I'm running away because of you. In fact—" The spark flamed up suddenly within Chapman—"I don't like unfinished business, so if you'll come outside right now—"

Pike's face sagged suddenly.

"I ain't got a gun with me," he mumbled.

"With fists then," snarled Chapman.

Pike turned suddenly and walked away.

A shudder ran through Chapman. There it was again—something in him that wanted to accept every challenge, even go out of the way to provoke it.

Yes, it would be better for him to go away.

He rejoined Clem Tancred and the others. Tancred said, "Saw you talking to George Pike. Didn't know you knew him."

"I met him on the train."

"I may kill him some day," Tancred said laconically.

PIKE had gone back to his cronies and they went into a huddle. Chapman wondered if they were going to take up the gauntlet he had thrown at Pike.

"I think I'll dance," Clem Tancred announced. "Maybe she'll turn me down." He winked at Chapman and began pushing his way through the dancing couples.

Chapman watched him and was surprised to see Tancred go up to Evelyn Comstock and talk to her. He was even more surprised when he saw her nod and put up her arms for Clem.

Well, perhaps he wasn't so surprised. The Tancred family still owned their land, more than 3,000 acres of it. Before the war Major Tancred had been one of the wealthiest men in the county. He had owned a stage-line, hundreds of head of cattle and horses, a livery business in Freedom.

The livestock melted away during the war; his enterprises were taken over by the Union Army after the major was killed by Kansas soldiers turned murderers. The Tancreds had suffered as much as any Clay County family, and Clem as well as his brother had ridden under the black flag. Clem had partially redeemed himself by going with General Price after Lawrence, but Dan had remained with Quantrell, had even gone with him to Kentucky on the last fatal expedition. For that reason he was now living in Texas.

There were only a few minutes left of the encore. At the end of it, a tall, black-haired man in a gray Prince Albert took Evelyn Comstock from Clem Tancred.

Clem came back to Chapman. "She told me about the train business, Jim. You should have let Pike have it then and saved us all some trouble."

"Who's the tall fellow in the gray Prince Abert?" Chapman countered curiously.

"Her brother, Captain Cliff Comstock. He's in the bank with old Preston. Halliday was called to Kansas City on some business. That's a break for me. I'd never have got to dance with her otherwise."

Pike and a pair of his friends had broken away from the others in his crowd and were cutting across the dance floor to intercept a square-built man with an iron-gray spade beard.

Pike talked excitedly to the bearded man for a moment and the latter nodded and began searching faces until he saw Clem and then shifted to Chapman.

"I suppose," Chapman said, quietly, "that's Gregg, the sheriff with whom my friend Pike is talking."

"Yeah. And he's coming over here. Maybe he's going to make something. Though I guess he wouldn't dare, not here."

Sheriff Gregg came over alone, moving heavily and methodically through the crowd. He greeted Clem Tancred.

"Hello, Clem. Havin' a good time?"

"I was," Clem retorted.

"I don't know your friend," Gregg said deliberately.

"He's one of the Booths," Tancred said bluntly. "John Wilkes."

Gregg stroked his spade beard.

"Name's Chapman, isn't it?" he said to Chapman. "Just got home, eh? Yesterday?"

"Uh-uh. Today."

Gregg's bushy eyebrows went up. "Today?"

"Today. Didn't your friend Pike tell you he met me on the train?"

"He didn't mention it." Gregg cocked his head to look where Pike was in another huddle with his cronies.

"He must have forgotten. Or perhaps he didn't like to tell you that I threw him off the train because he was drunk and disturbing the passengers."

Like a cat, Gregg stuck out the tip of his tongue and licked the top of his whiskers. "I suppose you were on the same train with your friend, Clem?"

"No, I wasn't," snapped Clem Tancred. "And I know what you're getting at, too. I was at home all afternoon and I can prove it."

"You may have to," Sheriff Gregg said. And with that parting shot he walked across the room to Pike.

Clem swore. "Sanctimonious hypocrite! Let's go and see if the boys have left anything in the jug. Want to get the bad taste out of my mouth."

THERE was some left in the jug, but it was not the same one they had sampled before. That one lay empty on the ground inside the woodshed.

Dick Wood and the Welker boys had been passing the second jug around.

Clem told them about the brush with the sheriff. Dick Wood chuckled. "He say he's getting out warrants, Clem?"

Clem Tancred slapped Wood's mouth, not too gently. "Don't even joke about that, Dick. I don't like it."

"It's only among our bunch," Dick said sullenly.

"You're getting to talk as much as Billy," Clem Tancred snapped. "Keep your mouth shut."

Outside, Anne Taylor called: "Jim Chapman!"

Chapman stuck his head out of the woodshed. "Yes, Anne?"

"Ed wants to go home. Are you coming with us?"

"Hell, the evening's young," Clem said to Chapman.

Chapman shrugged. "My first day home, you know. I could use some sleep. Why not ride over tomorrow, Clem?"

"I will," Clem promised. "If Gregg doesn't come over too soon."

Ed Taylor already had the wagon ready. Chapman helped his sister in, then climbed up himself. When they were out in the road, Anne said, "I wanted to get you away before the trouble started, Jim. Pike was about to fight the war over again."

Chapman did not tell his sister that it was himself, rather than the Confederates, Pike wanted to fight. He was just as glad to avoid trouble.

He slept that night up in the attic where he and his brother had slept in the old days. He even cracked his head on the old beam beside the old four-poster.

CHAPTER IV

DEATH IN WAITING

THE odor of frying pork and hot coffee awakened Chapman the next morning. He dressed quickly and climbed down the ladder to the kitchen. His sister was cooking breakfast and carrying on a conversation with a slatternly-looking woman of about forty.

"This is Mrs. Hobson, Jim, our neighbor."

Mrs. Hobson examined Chapman with sharp eyes. "So you're Jim Chapman that we've heard so much about. Why, you're only a boy."

"You have to be a boy before you're a man," Chapman said dryly and went outside where a tin basin and a bucket of water stood on the bench beside the door.

He washed and dried himself on a huck towel hanging from a nail. While he was busy, Mrs. Hobson came out and attempted to carry on a conversation, but when Chapman merely grunted replies, she took herself off to her home, out by the main road.

Anne came then and announced that breakfast was ready. She called Ed from his work outside.

"Mrs. Hobson brought the gossip," Anne said while the men were eating. "They had a fight at the dance last night. That ruffian Yankee, Pike, slugged Clark Welker and then Clem Tancred blacked both of Pike's eyes. It was all Sheriff Gregg could do to prevent gunplay. It's a good thing we left early. Mrs. Hobson said the fight started because of some things Pike said about you, Jim. I didn't know you knew the man."

"I had a brush with him on the train," Chapman replied. "He was drunk and scaring people. I kicked him off."

Ed Taylor shook his head. "Pike's got a lot of influence around here. He's the leader of the Northern trash that's taken over. Gregg plays up to him and Gregg's brother-in-law, Major Peterson, is the provost marshal."

Chapman ate silently for awhile, but when he finished the last of his coffee, he said: "Maybe it was a mistake to come back. I think I'll run over to Kansas City. Man I met on the train offered me a job."

"A job in Kansas City?" exclaimed Anne. "Doing what? You've never worked for anyone."

"Why, this is sort of detective work," Chapman exclaimed.

Ed Taylor gulped and Chapman's sister stared at him. "Detective work. After what—I mean, well, that *is* rather surprising. Who's the man wants to hire you?"

"Alan Vickers."

"To the woods!" he cried.

Ed Taylor whistled softly. "You're not taking the job?"

"Why not? The job might work into something pretty good."

"But Vickers is a Yankee!" cried Anne. "He furnished all the spies for McClellan. Besides—don't even mention the name Vickers around here these days. Folks won't like it."

Outside, a voice hallooed. Chapman went to the door and greeted Clarence Welker, astride a big chestnut gelding.

"Morning, Clarence."

"Gregg's served a warrant on Clem, Jim. I understand he's getting one out for you, Jim."

"Me? What for?"

"Same thing. The Cagel job."

"But I wasn't here when that happened."

Clarence Welker grinned. "*I* know that. So does everyone else. Gregg can't make it stick, but he figures to bother you enough so you'll pull out of here. Pike's behind it, of course."

"Pike!" snapped Chapman. "I should

have killed him when I had the chance."

"Jim!" cried Anne Taylor from the doorway. "Don't talk like that."

Chapman bit his lip. "Is Clem getting bail?"

"Oh yes! They can't prove anything on him. Nobody's going to get up in a courtroom and testify that Clem Tancred, or anyone else, robbed the Cagel bank. Nobody who figures on living to be a ripe old age."

DOWN the lane came the hoofbeats of a galloping horse. After a moment Clark Welker burst into sight.

"Jim!" he cried, "Gregg's comin' here with a posse. Better take to the woods."

"How many are there?"

"Six or seven. Pike and his gang. Gregg's swore them in as deputies."

Chapman nodded. "Let's go talk to them."

"Jim!" cried Anne Taylor. "Don't you—"

He shook his head and walked off, without looking back. The Welker boys trotted their horses beside him. When they had gone up the lane a little way, Clark Welker said in a low tone, "I haven't got a gun, Jim."

"It's all right. We're not going to fight." His own gun was up in the attic of the house. It was just as well. The war was over and things could no longer be settled with a Navy Colt.

The posse was just turning in from the road when the trio of former guerrillas met them. The possemen lined up across the lane. Sheriff Gregg said easily: "Morning, boys. Out early, aren't you?"

"So're you," retorted Clark Welker.

"I understand you have a warrant for me, Sheriff," Chapman said.

Sheriff Gregg pretended surprise. "What makes you think that?"

"Have you got one?"

"Of course not. What've you done that I ought to get a warrant for?" He stroked his glossy spade beard. "I did serve a paper on Clem Tancred this morning. But that was for something that happened before you got back to Freedom. Uh, George here, has given you an alibi."

Pike moved his horse up beside Gregg's. "Go on, Gregg, tell him."

Gregg pretended to have just recalled something that had apparently not been important enough to remember. "Oh —I was riding by this way, today and Major Peterson, the provost marshal, mentioned that I stop by and tell you to come in and see him."

"What for?"

"Why, I don't know, Chapman. Probably just some red tape, you know. Check up on your parole. Nothing important. Well, I'll be seeing you around, I suppose."

With that the horsemen wheeled and headed back toward Freedom. The Welkers waited until they were out of earshot then Clark exclaimed: "Be damned! That Gregg is smooth. He's getting his brother-in-law to pull out his chestnuts for him."

"I haven't got a parole," said Chapman. "I never have surrendered, you know."

"I guess you'll have to, Jim," said Clarence. "All the Confederates got amnesty."

"Clark," Chapman said, "mind letting me have your horse? Think I'll ride in now and get it over with. Go back to the house and tell Anne."

Clark Welker promptly slid from his horse. "Sure, Jim. Take your time. I'll get me some sleeping." He grinned. "Or maybe I'll watch Ed work. That always tired me out."

Clarence Welker and Chapman rode leisurely to Freedom, in order not to catch up with Gregg and his posse. They encountered Clem Tancred on the street, across from the bank. He had already posted bail. He was seething.

"They're carrying things too far, I tell you," he declared. "We're not going to stand for much more. Where you going, Jim?"

"To the provost marshal's. He wants to see me. I haven't surrendered yet, you know."

Clem Tancred frowned. "All right, but Clarence and me'll wait outside. If he tries any funny stuff, just you yell!"

"No, Clem," said Chapman. "We're not going to make any trouble. According to the law I've got to surrender and

according to the same law he's got to give me my parole."

"Well, we'll wait for you, anyway."

A COUPLE of uniformed soldiers were loafing outside the provost marshal's office. They scowled at the trio of former Confederates, but Welker and Tancred ignored them and seated themselves upon the stairs of a neighboring house.

Chapman went into the provost marshal's office and was kept waiting twenty minutes in an anteroom by a clerk with corporal's chevrons on his blouse. When he finally went into the provost marshal's office, Major Peterson was reading a newspaper with his boots up on a desk.

"Who're you?" he snapped at Chapman.

"James Chapman. I'm applying for a parole."

"Parole? Kind of late for that, aren't you?"

Chapman shrugged and Major Peterson removed his feet from the desk. "Your regiment?"

"Fourteenth Missouri."

"Oh," said Peterson, sarcastically. "You're from Shelby's famous brigade, eh? Very romantic. You buried your flag in the Rio Grande, rather than surrender it. Nice sentiment. Well, how long did you serve with Shelby?"

"From October '64 until its disbandment in Mexico City."

Major Peterson took a blank and dipped a pen into an inkwell. He wrote for a moment. "And what was your regiment before October, 1864?"

Chapman looked steadily at the provost marshal. After a moment, Peterson jerked up his head. "Well? Can't you answer?"

"You know very well what I did before then." Chapman said evenly.

Peterson bared his teeth in a grimace. "Guerrilla, huh? I've got to put it down that way. How long were you with Quantrell?"

"A year and a half."

Major Peterson's pen scratched; then

You've got a shaving treat in store—
Try Thin Gillettes—ten cents for four!
They whisk through stubble extra quick—
You look well-groomed—your face feels slick!
New kind of edges on steel hard enough to cut glass!
THIN
Gillette
BLADES
4 for 10c
8 for 19c
The Thin Gillette Blade Is Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

finally he laid it down and put the slip of paper in a seal. He pressed down on it and waved the parole in the air.

"I'm giving this to you because I have to, Chapman," he said, curtly. "But I'm going to do something that I don't have to do. I'm going to warn you about your future actions around here. I don't mind telling you that I served under Lieutenant-Colonel Plumb in enforcing Order No. 11 here and in Jackson County and I know all about your crowd. I'm telling you—behave yourself."

"You'll get no trouble from me," Chapman said softly.

"I hope not. One more repetition of what your friends did here yesterday and this county goes under martial law. Real martial law, not what we've got now. It's going to be tough on your crowd then."

Chapman reached forward and took the parole from Peterson's hand, then without a word turned and left the provost marshal's office.

Outside, Clem Tancred and Clarence Welker were still sitting on the stairs next door. Their faces were taut. The Federal soldiers nearby were talking loudly.

One of them was saying, "I'd give them paroles with the bayonet; that's what I'd do if I had my way."

"Come on," Chapman said curtly to his friends. They got up quickly.

"Shall I take a poke at them?" Clem Tancred asked.

Chapman took his arm. They crossed the street and got their horses, then rode to the far side of the square. There Tancred stopped his horse and swung from the saddle.

"I'm going in here to have a drink," he said, nodding toward a brick building over which was a sign: *"Hoffstetter's Saloon.*

"That's up to you, Clem," said Chapman. "I'm going home. How about you, Clarence?"

Clarence Welker hesitated, then finally sided with Chapman. "Maybe this ain't the time to get liquored up, Clem."

Clem Tancred swore. "If they're looking for trouble, they know where to find me."

Chapman and Clarence Welker rode out of Freedom. Chapman felt oddly depressed. "I don't think we should have left Clem back in town."

"No, maybe not," agreed Welker. "But Clem's got a mighty stubborn streak in him. We'd pressed him and he'd just as likely gone back to pick a fight with those bluecoats. Best to let him work it off by himself."

THEY rode in silence for a few minutes; then Chapman sighed wearily. "I don't think I like it so well around here. Things have changed too much."

"Sure they've changed. We lost a war. None of us like that, except maybe the Yanks. They won the war. What you figure on doing, Jim?"

"I don't know. I hadn't thought about it much, except to come home. I can see now that it isn't going to work out. I may try it farther west. They're sending cattle up from Texas and it may grow into something big. I don't know. It might be a good thing to see what's in it—"

"Oh-oh," said Clarence. "Look what's coming."

Ahead, a hundred yards, a group of horsemen had come around a turn in the road. They were wearing blue uniforms. Snatches of boisterous song came to Chapman and Welker.

"Best keep our mouths shut," Welker cautioned.

The soldiers had seen them. The song stopped and the men seemed to be arguing among themselves. Then a voice yelled: "Rebels!"

"Easy!" Welker snapped in a low tone.

"Yow—eee!" yipped one of the soldiers.

Then a gun roared.

Clarence Welker jerked and let out a groan. Shocked, Chapman lunged his horse over to his friend. Clarence was fumbling under his coat, for his revolver.

He was cursing. "The dirty—"

Something tugged at Chapman's coat and he was aware that two or three guns were now barking.

"To the woods, Clarence!" he cried.

He reached out to catch Welker, but Clarence's body missed his grasp and tumbled to the road. The Navy Colt

that had been cleared from Clarence's belt thudded to the dust a couple of feet away. Stooping, Chapman's eyes were riveted on the gun.

In that instant that he looked at the gun, he tried to make a decision. His hand swooped down for the gun, but in the moment of closing upon it, he swept his hand sidewards and began straightening in his saddle.

He never quite made it. His borrowed horse suddenly screamed and reared up on its hind legs. Chapman was thrown from its back and landed in the road on his side, narrowly missing the plunging animal's hoofs.

Hoofs pounded the hard earth; the soldiers yelled wildly and a bullet kicked up dirt two feet from Chapman. He came up to his hands and knees, gasped when he saw that the soldiers were almost upon him and scuttled for the underbrush at the edge of the road.

"Get him!" a raucous voice roared.

A bullet clipped a twig from a bush in front of his face. Chapman lunged headlong for shelter. Enraged that he seemed to be escaping, the soldiers fired a volley at him. Then a tree seemed to fall and strike Chapman to the earth. He fell into a hazel bush and was vaguely aware that his face was gashed by a broken branch.

He felt no pain. A numbness had taken possession of him and a great weight pressed him down to the earth.

From far off, he heard someone cry out: "I got him, the dirty Rebel dog!"

The earth under his hands was moving backwards. It must have been the earth that moved, for Chapman knew that he was not propelling himself. He heard thrashing among the bushes behind him and wanted desperately to scramble away.

GUNS were still banging, but the reports were farther away. A wall of green laurel rushed down upon him and enveloped him in its massive greenery. It deadened all sound around him, and not until then did he become aware that it wasn't the earth at all that was moving. It was himself, crawling on hands and knees like a wounded wolf.

The weight on his back was disappearing, to be replaced by pain that wracked his entire body. He had been hit by a bullet. So had Clarence Welker. But Clarence was back there on the road, with a revolver near his hand.

Chapman was unarmed. And the drunken soldiers were beating the woods for him, firing into bushes and clumps of laurel. They had to get him, now. They couldn't leave a wounded man to testify against them.

A huge beast was floundering nearby. Chapman slipped to the ground and lay at full length. Black, polished boots appeared before his eyes, ten feet away. Above the boots was a pair of blue trousers, with yellow stripes down the seams. Chapman strained his eyes upwards, without moving his hand and saw the twisted face of Pike.

He couldn't see Chapman because all but his face was concealed in the laurel, but he knew that Chapman must be somewhere about.

"Chapman!" he called, "show your face, so I can put a bullet in it."

And Chapman lay in the laurel, bleeding.

From the rear, a voice yelled to Pike. "Come on, George. We've got to get out of here. People'll be coming along. . . ."

Pike called back, in a frenzy. "I want Jim Chapman, the——! He's around here somewhere."

"Let him go," the voice replied. "You saw him fall. He won't get far. This one's a goner."

Pike's legs disappeared but Chapman heard him thrashing around for a few minutes more. Then, gradually, silence descended upon the forest.

Chapman placed his hands flat on the ground and attempted to raise his body to a crawling position. Red pain exploded in his body, forcing a groan from his lips. He fell back to his face and lay for long moments, gathering sufficient strength for another attempt. He made it the second time and pulled himself forward, out of the laurel to a poplar tree. He grasped this and with its help began pulling himself to his feet.

When he succeeded he clung to the tree for awhile before forsaking it. He surprised himself, then, by walking to a

tree twenty feet away. He steadied himself on that one for a moment, then essayed the venture again, walking thirty feet or more.

He continued the process and after a little while was able to walk without stopping at all. After five minutes or so, he came to a small, cool stream. He waded it and saw a clearing ahead.

A woman in a gingham dress and a huge sun-bonnet was working among some rose bushes. Shortly behind her was a big, red brick house, with white pillars. Chapman did not recognize the house.

She straightened and he saw that it was Evelyn Comstock. She was holding a big pair of shears and staring at him. He took a step forward, then missed the ground with his foot and fell forward on his face. That was all he knew for some time.

CHAPMAN dreamed that he had been hiding in a cave and that it had fallen in on him and he was smothering under the earth. He clawed at it, but it filled his eyes and mouth and his frantic digging only brought more of the stuff down on him.

And then his eyes opened and through a thin layer of hay over his eyes he saw the blue sky and the bright, radiant sun. He heard creaking of wheels and as one of them hit a rut he was jolted so that pain lanced through his body.

He was lying in a moving wagon, covered loosely with hay.

Evelyn Comstock turned on the seat directly over him and said: "Better keep down. It's only another mile."

He stared upward at her face. It was calm, but her eyes were wide and her lips seemed to be twitching lightly. He said, "You—put me in here?"

"One of our boys helped me. I thought it safer, however, to drive you myself. There's trouble—"

"I know. They killed Clarence Welker."

She nodded. "And Clem Tancred. He killed a soldier in town."

Chapman groaned. "They've arrested him?"

"No. He got away. He's—he's at Fothergill's, where I'm taking you. You—well, you may as well know the worst. The soldiers claim *you* killed Welker. They said you left Freedom with him, that you shot him and—"

Chapman shook his head. "Then why are *you* going to all this. . . ."

She looked ahead on the road. "You interceded for me yesterday, without even knowing me. This is the least I can do in return."

"But you'll get in trouble."

"No one will know. Our boy will keep silent. And your sister says Fothergill is to be trusted."

"You talked to her?"

"I sent word by Rupe. Your sister said to take you to Fothergill's, because the sheriff had some men watching near your home."

Chapman laughed bitterly. "I should have stayed away. They haven't forgotten the war."

"No," she said, "they haven't. You—is it true—"

"That I rode with Bloody Bill Anderson? I did. I was sixteen years old, and—"

Evelyn Comstock exclaimed, "Oh, you don't have to explain to me. My brother was in the Confederate Army and we lived in Johnson County then. Mother took me to Nebraska when they issued Order No. 11. She died just after getting there. It was three months before father found me. You'd better cover yourself now. I'm turning in at Fothergill's."

Chapman pulled hay over his face as the wagon bounced over the stub of a dead log. After a moment, the wagon stopped and Evelyn Comstock called: "Mr. Fothergill!"

Jed Fothergill came to the wagon and helped Chapman to the ground. Fothergill was an emaciated man six and a half feet tall, with a death's head face. He said: "This 's been mighty fine of you, Miss Comstock. The boys won't forget it."

"It was the least I could do," she replied in a low tone. Her eyes met Chapman's and dropped.

He said: "Thanks. I hope I'll see you again!"

He was looking after her, when Fother-

gill beside him, said: "The lousy murdering—

Chapman roused. "Clem's here?"

"Yeah. An hour ago. Here he comes."

Clem Tancred came around the side of the log cabin, a Navy Colt in his hand. He said: "You were right about not staying in town, Jim. But—"

"But I got it just the same," Chapman finished.

"You didn't pack a gun, Jim."

"Clarence had one. He didn't get to use it. They opened up on us without giving us a chance. It was Pike and his gang, wearing uniforms."

Clem Tancred's big face became hard. "Pike in a uniform, eh? So it was all set for us. They knew you'd be coming along that road and figured I'd be with you. I guess this evens things for the Cagel job."

A HUNDRED yards behind Fothergill's house, Clem Tancred had dumped a pile of army blankets and a Sharp's rifle. Chapman spread himself on one of the blankets and Tancred removed his blood-soaked shirt and examined the wound.

"It's not so bad, Jim," he said. "The bullet's in, but it's not touching any bone and it's just as well to leave it. I'll get some clean rags from Jed and wash it up."

A half hour later, when Clem had bandaged the wound, Clark Welker and Billy Bligh came back to the hiding place. Welker was grim and taciturn, but Bligh was loud in his denunciations.

"They're asking for it and they're going to get it. They think we're going to take anything laying down. Damn it, it wasn't us that surrendered. There's just as many Confederates around here as there ever was and they're fed up with being pushed around. The yellow-bellied sons, we'll fix them—"

Clark Welker said suddenly, "I'm not going to wait for them to get me."

Chapman rolled his head to look at the surviving twin.

"Think it over first, Clark," he said.

"I have. I'm going to get Pike and Gregg. Two for one. That'll make it even."

"I'll get me four," Bligh announced.

Chapman sighed wearily. "How much was your share from the Cagel Bank, Billy?"

Bligh colored. "Six thousand. Why?"

"Because when you've gone through it all, you'll pull another job."

"Me, I think I'll go to Texas," said Clark Welker. "After I get Pike and Gregg."

"Texas, yeah!" cried Billy Bligh. "We'll all go there. They say there's money to be made down there in cattle. Why don't we all throw in together and buy us a big ranch?"

"I'm willing," said Clem Tancred. "Dan says it's good country down there. You can pick up cattle at three dollars a head and sell it for twenty up in Kansas. He's coming up to talk me into going back with him."

Chapman laughed bitterly. "You're all talking around the ring. Why don't you jump into the middle and say what you're going to do?"

Even Billy Bligh was silent for a moment then. Chapman looked around the circle of faces. "Hold up another bank—that's what you're going to do, isn't it?"

Clem Tancred said, "You're with us?"

"Don't I *have* to be with you? I came home with fourteen dollars. I stopped a bullet. How am I going to get to Texas, or hell, without any money?"

Billy Bligh yelped. "That's the stuff, Jim. We'll show them, the—"

Ed Taylor came after dark. He brought Chapman his Navy Colt. "Sorry, Jim. Anne's pretty worried, but she says for you to lay low. Why don't you take a trip to St. Louis for awhile, until this blows over?"

"Do you think it'll blow over, Ed?"

"I don't know. I only hope it doesn't get any worse."

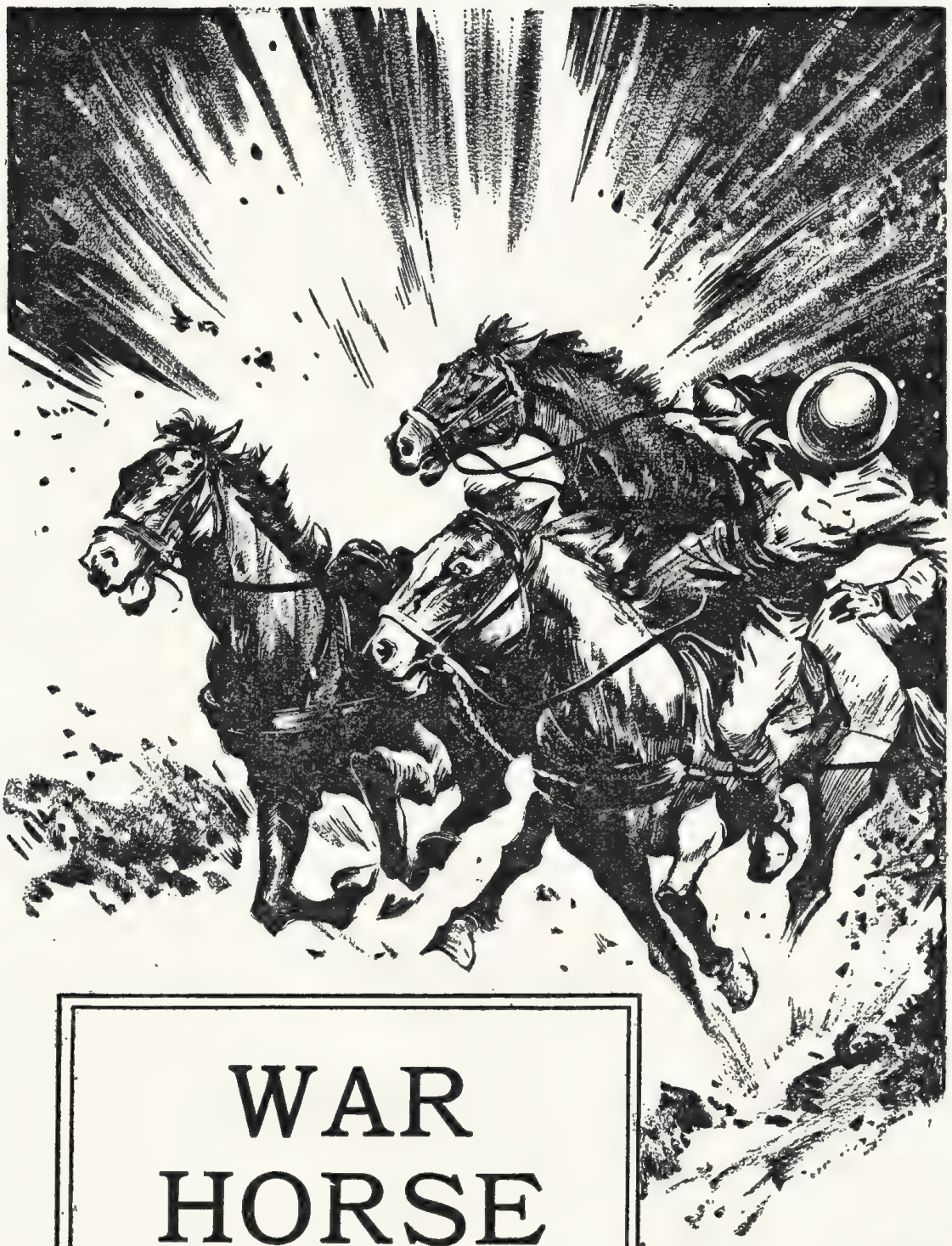
After Taylor had gone, Fothergill came into the woods. "Couple fellows rode by a little while ago. Do you think it's all right?"

"We'd better move."

"Can you make it, Jim?" Clem asked.

"Sure. A couple of miles, anyway. It feels all right since you bandaged it. We oughtn't stay too long in one place."

(To be continued)



The boy from Milwaukee threw up his arms, swayed, fell.

WAR HORSE

A NOVELETTE

By FAIRFAX DOWNEY

MILLING masses of horses jammed the corrals of the big Kansas City Remount Depot. Under the summer sun tossing manes and shifting backs gave the effect of a broad grain field, swept by wind, a field sombre in tone. Bays mingled with blacks, sorrels, chestnuts, roans, and a few dark grays. There was not a single white, buckskin or pinto, for these were war horses. No animal with a light-colored hide would reach France to draw the fire of German batteries.

A Texan perched on the top rail of a fence gazed out over the crowded corrals and marveled. Veteran of many a round-up though he was, Jim Thomas never had seen so many horses gathered in one place. The lot he had helped herd here was lost in this multitude. It was only a small fraction of the cavalcade of hundreds of thousands of horses and mules which had been going to Europe since 1914 and which now the United States was mustering for its own war effort.

A sudden commotion among the horses near him caught the Texan's attention. A big, black gelding was bullying a little chestnut mare, shoving her around with his heavy shoulders, and from the look of his laid-back ears using considerable bad language.

"No way to treat a lady," muttered Jim Thomas.

That little mare had been in the bunch he brought up here. He remembered thinking that if he had found her back on his home range, he would have tried her out in his string.

The mare kept moving away, but the tough black was determined to pick a fight. He arched his neck, bared his teeth and darted forward viciously to bite. Swiftly the mare sprang away, wheeled like a flash. Her dainty hoofs beat out a tattoo on ribs. The bully snorted, squealed with pain and dashed away to hide himself in the herd.

"Yippee!" yelled Thomas. "Sock him again!"

The mare stood fast, looking up at the man on the fence. Trim and small, barely fifteen hands high, she was shaggy and unkempt, not much of a horse on casual observation. But the Texan marked her strong shoulders and haunches, those clean legs. She bore the brand of a big ranch. Perhaps originally she had been roped in one of those wild horse round-ups the vast demand was causing. As though she realized she was being admired, the mare tossed her head.

More than the light frame and wiry legs, that narrow, well-shaped head told Jim Thomas something. He scanned the width of forehead, sign of brains and courage, the small, alert ears, wide nostrils, which would flare at a gallop and show scarlet as fire.

"Arab blood, sure enough, and more'n a little," he said under his breath.

Out of the deserts of Arabia had come the mare's fleet forebears to carry the fierce squadrons of Islam on their path of conquest through Egypt and High Barbary and Spain. To become the spoils of war when King Ferdinand thrust the Saracens out of their last strongholds in Granada. To make the fearsome voyage to the New World in rolling caravels and be ridden roughshod by the Spaniards over the Empire of Montezuma, whose Aztec warriors fled in greater terror of the strange, snorting beasts than of the lances and flashing swords of their riders. To win from their masters, the Conquistadores, the tribute set down in their chronicles: "For, after God, we owed the victory to our horses."

The mare leaped nervously away, galloping to the far side of the corral.

SOME clodhopping soldier would be getting a better mount than he knew and probably ruin her entirely—which was none of Jim Thomas's affair. He stared lazily across the corral at a group of cowboys. From their laughing and yelling, they had been making the rounds of Kansas City saloons. One lanky puncher climbed through the rails of the fence with a lariat, loosened its coils and whirled it. As the horses near him scattered he threw. The loop settled over the neck of the little chestnut mare and was drawn taut.

The mare stood. She knew the rope of old. Swaggering over, the tall puncher quickly took two turns of the rope around the mare's nose and vaulted on to her back. Long legs wrapped around her.

Swish! Wack! A quirt raised dust on the mare's hide. For an instant of quivering surprise, she did not move. Then she lit out. She pitched, mixing high jumps with low. Only a fine rider could have stuck on bareback.

"Go it, Shorty!" "Get some glue on your pants!" The rider's outfit cheered him wildly from the fence. Directly in front of the gallery, the mare slid to a stop with stiff legs and suddenly whirled,

swapping ends. The lanky puncher hit the dust with a thud.

Amid jeers from the others, he got to his feet. Then he did something he might never have done if he had not been a little drunk.

He still held an end of his rope. Rapidly he snubbed it around a fence post. Running along it to where the mare strained against it, he grabbed her by the mane and began kicking her in the belly.

The next thing he knew, he kicked air and sat down hard. A stranger, closing the jack-knife that had severed the lariat, stood over him.

"Any hombre," said Jim Thomas, "that'll kick a horse is"—

The Texan made it emphatic. By the time he had finished, the tall puncher was up and at him with flailing fists. Knuckles smacked on flesh. Thomas backed away, sparing a glance over his shoulders, half expecting some of Shorty's friends to pile on to him from behind. But some of them cheered him on.

Shorty, towering over the Texan and outreaching him, landed jolting punches. Thomas spat blood and closed in. He swung hard, missed and took more punishment. Doggedly he bored in again. Right and left, he smashed at the other's stomach.

"How's it feel in *your* belly?" he demanded and hit again.

The tall man grunted. His guard dropped, and he took one on the chin. For the third time he imprinted his pants seat in the dirt of the corral.

"Got enough," he gasped, sitting there.

Thomas walked away, mopping his face.

The horses in the corral were being herded toward a chute to pass before the government buyers. Among them the little chestnut mare, the loop of the lariat still around her neck, walked quietly.

BESIDE a veterinary stood a captain of the remount service. Dapper in his well-cut boots, the officer might have been put down as an Eastern tenderfoot, masquerading as a judge of horse-flesh, by those who did not know him as a noted master of fox hounds and owner of a private racing stable. He was one of the fifty best-known horsemen in the United States, commissioned a captain in the reserve corps and assigned to the purchase board of the remount service.

"What's the verdict, Doctor?" asked the captain, cocking an eye at the mare.

"Small, no spring chicken, but sound as a dollar," answered the veterinary.

"Humph," the captain said. "Bet she can jump. I could make that little mare into a mighty hunter."

Jim Thomas listened and nodded from a new seat on the fence. The captain glanced up.

"Yep, bet she can jump," he said again. "What do you think, cowboy?"

"Reckon she can, Cap. A man could round up some Germans on her."

"Passed for Uncle Sam." The officer waved the mare on.

SOMEHOW the Texan had found himself in the box car with the mare as one of the shipment escort. Men like him were needed—he took the job. It was a slow trip East, with the train shunted often on to sidings, but the horses kept it from being a dull one for Thomas. Fine, strong, intelligent fellows they were, patiently munching hay in the car racks. Averaging from fifteen hands two inches to a hand taller, weighing about 1,200 pounds, they were an ideal field artillery type. Many were draft animals from farms, and some of the best of these were three-year-olds, by government-owned stallions out of farm mares, bred and sold under contract to the remount at $150 a head. Out of them, the Army, spending sixty-two millions on war horses and mules, got more than its money's worth.

Mingled with the draft horses were lighter animals like the chestnut mare, mounts for officers, non-coms, and details. These might have served for cavalry, but the regiments of that gallant arm, doomed by the machine-gun, were dwindling, changing into artillery.

The mare stood with legs braced against the swaying box car. Every other horse in the car, packed flank to flank

and facing opposite directions, loomed over her. Had it been possible for her to be jostled by her heavier companions, she might have slipped and fallen, snapping a slender leg.

But Thomas took precautions. He had rigged up a stall for the mare near his own quarters at an end of the car. When the sunburned young Texan was kidded by the train crew and asked if he were taking that runt of a mare to General Pershing, he only grinned.

The train was chuffed over the Alleghenies. Another day and a night and they pulled into Washington yards, to turn the horses over to the Army. The worn horses were led from the cars, kicking and skittish, overjoyed to be on firm ground. A harassed officer marshalled his scant horse detail. Thomas hesitated. Then: "Need any help?" he offered.

"I do," the officer answered. "Got to get these nags all the way to Fort Myer. More of 'em than I counted on. Much obliged if you'll lend a hand. Saddle up."

Would he ride the mare? Why not? He'd never see her again, and this was his last chance. Tempted though he was, Jim Thomas saddled a bay instead. The mare was one of the two led horses with which he joined the column clattering through the streets. Smooth-gaited and sure-footed she was on the unaccustomed asphalt.

Washington felt like a war, much more than the West had. The column, having crossed the bridge into Virginia, climbed the hill to Fort Myer. The parade ground was covered with khaki batalions, rank on rank A bugle call, "Retreat," floated, clear and sweet, through the afternoon air.

"Halt," called the officer. A band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," the sunset gun putting a period to its last stirring chord. All along the column, the green horses shied and jumped. The line moved on to the corrals. Thomas turned in the mare with the rest.

The officer was beside him, speaking. "Thanks. I'll see you get chow and a bunk in the barracks for the night. You've got transportation back West?"

"In the service," said another officer, "we can use a horse wrangler like you."

"Reckon I may get in some day."

The officer called a corporal. "Take care of this man in the mess and see he gets a bunk." He turned to go.

"Lieutenant," Thomas said, "where's this lot of horses bound?"

"They're filling out the quota of a new artillery regiment in camp about ten miles from here. Well, so long and thanks again."

Jim Thomas followed the corporal. No great hurry about getting back West. He'd kind of like to see what happened.

THE mare's future was decided that night by a bottle of liquid lightning, fifty loose mules, and one black eye.

On pass from the Virginia encampment where a brand-new field artillery outfit was being whipped into shape, Stable Sergeant Michael Quinn of Battery "D" marched upon the venerable town of Alexandria. In a tavern, he met the bottle. He started back for camp with just time enough to make it before the midnight limit. By bluff, blarney, and the strength of his chevrons, he got past the guard. Elated, expansive, he swung along with an On-to-Berlin air. Jubilantly he began to sing the regimental song.

"We don't know where we're going,
but we're on our way.
We're out to make a showing for the
—th F. A.
And when the Kaiser sees us, you will
hear him say,
'I don't know where I'm going but
I'm on my way.'"

So chanted Sergeant Michael Quinn and strode onward. Nothing could stop him, no, nothing—

In the darkness dead ahead of him a bell tolled a single, sepulchral note. A white, ghostly visage thrust itself straight at him. With a long sigh of relief, Sergeant Quinn recognized the apparition, the old, blaze-faced bell mare. She had broken loose from the supply company's picket line youder where her loyal following of mules, hearing her bell and missing her, stamped and snorted.

"You old darlint, throwin' a scare into me like that!" he chided, embracing the gentle animal. Good cheer flooded back

over him. "Prepare to mount. Mount," he commanded himself, and hoisted himself up on her back. "Forward, ho!" ordered Stable Sergeant Quinn, and off he rode, the bell at the mare's neck clanking loudly.

Through the tent-lined battery streets raced the cavalcade, bell clanging, hoofs thundering, ears flapping. Canvas collapsed on sleeping artillerymen, as guy ropes were snapped in the stampede. Every sentry on post clamored for the corporal of the guard. Animals from other picket lines wrenched loose and joined the mêlée. Officers' Row erupted frantic figures, attired in tunics, pajama pants, and automatic pistols.

On galloped Sergeant Quinn, whooping and digging his heels into his mount's flanks, finally to bring up smack against the side of a mess hall. It was Second Lieutenant John Brent of his own battery who cornered him there and turned a flashlight on him.

"Get off that horse, Sergeant!" he ordered, grabbing the headstall.

"Lay off!" Quinn roared. "Leggo! I'm on me way!"

Brent tugged at his leg. Whereupon the sergeant leaned over and clouted Brent in the eye.

The next instant he was swept from his steed and being shaken into sobriety in the grasp of big First Sergeant McNally.

"You drunken damn fool! Striking an officer!" McNally groaned. "You done enough hitches in this Army to know what that means—Leavenworth and hard labor!" He turned to Brent sadly. "Sir, the lieutenant will have to prefer charges. I'm witness."

Brent, rubbing his eye, shook his head. A green young officer, but wise beyond his length of service, he answered:

"No, I'll not prefer charges. Quinn is drunk and didn't know what he was doing. Besides, he's too good a stable sergeant to lose. Nobody saw it but us. If this eye of mine turns into a shiner, I'll blame it on a mule."

In the frosty, blue eyes of the veteran McNally shone a gleam. There might still be a chance of winning a war with a bunch of civilians in uniform, if there were enough of them like this lad.

"Very good, sir," he said and led away the bell mare.

STABLE SERGEANT QUINN, pale and bleary-eyed, was on hand the next noon when the horses sent over from Fort Myer were brought into camp and picketed. On the surface they looked an unpromising lot, shoeless, hides caked with dirt, tails almost dragging on the ground. A few officers and old non-coms knew better. A smile of approval pushed up the military mustache of the regiment's commander. Colonel Mack knew good artillery motive power when he saw it and had known it since those days seventeen years ago when he as a young lieutenant rode with Reilly's Battery to the relief of the legations in Pekin.

The battery commanders drew for order of choice of horses, but their crafty old stable sergeants did the actual picking. Here one veteran chose an agile lead horse. There another indicated a strong wheel horse, swearing bitterly when a likely mate for it was snapped up by the next chooser.

Jim Thomas, hovering solicitously around the chestnut mare, heard a fierce whisper at his elbow.

"And who might you be?" Sergeant Quinn of "D" Battery was glaring at him.

"Me? Oh, I helped bring these horses East."

"I'll thank you to quit pointing that little chestnut mare like one of them hunting dawgs."

"All right. But I'm sort of interested in her."

"So will the other sergeants be if you kape on passing her in review under their eyes. Lay off till my turn comes 'round agin."

"I'll do that." Thomas turned his back on the mare. "Know a good horse when you see one, don't you, Sarge?"

Quinn crooked a thumb at the khaki horse head on his chevrons. "Did you think that was a goat?" he growled.

"Battery 'D's' choice," announced the sergeant-major.

Quinn strolled all along the line. "Tough pickings by this time," he said. Finally he nonchalantly indicated the chestnut. "I'll be taking this here gazelle," he declared. "Lead out, orderly."

"Who'll be riding the little mare?" Thomas asked.

"Why? What of it?"

"Just wondered."

"Know something about the nag? Come on, spill it."

"I saw a little of her out at the depot in Kaysee, and I brought her East. She's got the makings, but she's had rotten treatment somewheres before she was bought. She don't trust anybody. If she's handled right, she'll make a grand *caballo*. If she ain't, she'll turn mean or end up a broken-spirited plug after some bum beats hell out of her."

It was a long speech for the Texan. He took a breath and resumed: "It'll take time and patience for somebody that knows horses. Reckon you could do it, Sarge."

"Not me, m'boy. Im nurse to two hundred of them. No time for private patients."

"Who'll be riding her?" Thomas persisted.

Sergeant Quinn's jovial Irish eyes turned crafty. "Oh, I dunno. Some officer mebbe. Mebbe that one there." He waved a hand toward Lieutenant Brent, cutting across the parade ground.

"Him with the black eye?"

"That's him."

"Somebody good hung that shanty on him."

"Do you say so now?" Quinn replied with an air of gratification. "They claim it was a mule done it."

"Can he ride?"

"He sticks on by the grace o' God."

Thomas contemptuously marked the officer's brand new boots. "He'd wreck the little mare," he declared bitterly.

"Well, he don't get her if I don't tell him she's a good horse. Now if I had some good man who'd really take her in hand—"

The old sergeant paused. He had every intention of giving the mare to Lieutenant Brent in return for his forbearance of last night. Yet he realized from what this civilian had told him that she must be gentled and put into shape first.

"If I had somebody to take her in hand and train her," he repeated, "twould be only right he'd be the lad to have her for his mount."

Jim Thomas walked over toward the little mare on the picket line. He dropped an arm on her neck.

"Good-by, old girl," he whispered. "Good luck to you over there."

A voice sounded behind him. "Lad," Stable Sergeant Quinn hailed him. "There's a recruiting station over to Fort Myer. 'Twould be no trick at all to get assigned to this rigimint. And, come to think of it, I'm needing a stable orderly."

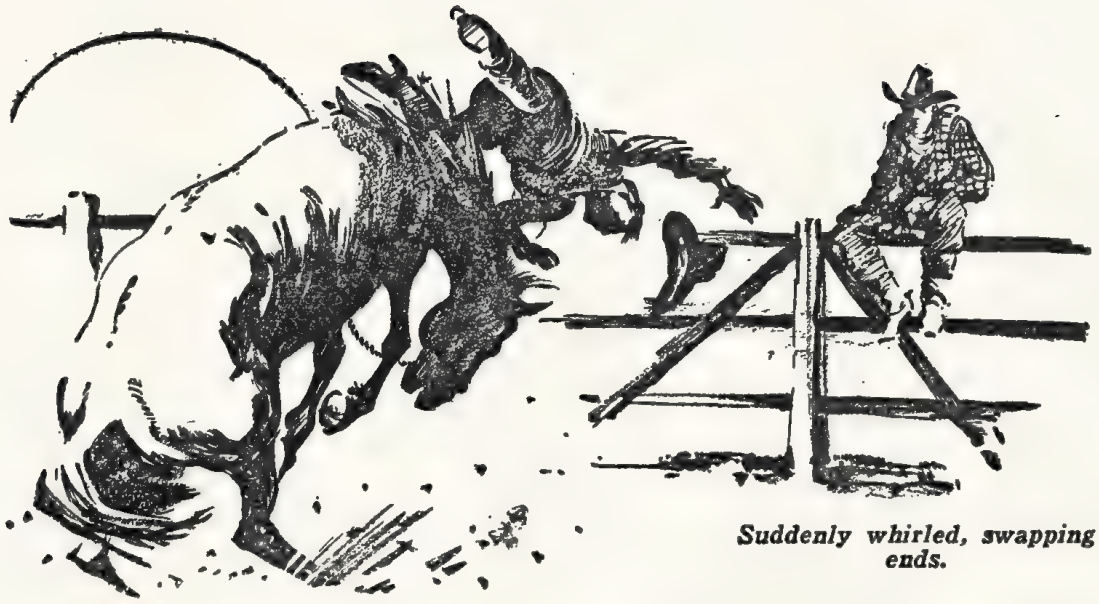
Thomas dug the toe of a boot into the ground. Crazy idea, getting into a foreigners' war. He didn't have to go, not till there was a draft anyway.

Moving away, he called back:

"Thanks, Sarge. Reckon I might be seeing you again."

Even the well-oiled conscience of Sergeant Quinn suffered a twinge at that. No buck private would be getting the mare—not when Mike Quinn could pay a past favor with her and lay up credit for future ones.

"It's a dirty trick I'm playin' on the lad," he muttered.



Suddenly whirled, swapping ends.

CHAPTER II

DAUGHTER OF THE GUNS

CINDERELLA, dressing for the ball, was not more handsomely arrayed than the chestnut mare, nor was the former lady's transformation more startling. Neatly shod, mane and tail trimmed and brushed, coat groomed to shine like satin, the mare tossed her head and seemed to take a feminine pride in her own appearance. Her tire maidens, two sweating buck privates, finally were relieved of the duty. Theirs had been no easy task, for the mare was hard to handle. Sergeant Quinn started in search of Second Lieutenant John Brent.

He found him in the gun park and saluted with military precision. "Sir, Stable Sergeant Quinn requists permission to speak to the Lieutenant."

"Say on, Sergeant," Brent granted.

"Sir, fresh in me memory is the unfortunate ruckus a night or so ago. But for the Lieutenant, I'd be fighting the war on a rock pile at Leavenworth. The luck of the Irish is no less than their gratitude. I've got a good mount for the Lieutenant down on the picket line if he'll come take a look."

"Anything but a mule," said Johnny Brent, grinning ruefully. "They kick like thunder."

Down on the line, Quinn displayed the mare with the air of a proud parent with his first-born.

"She's a beauty," Brent responded. "But—but isn't she pretty small, Sergeant?"

For what Johnny Brent, romantic chap, wanted was a mighty charger. Too much reading of the days when knighthood was in flower had done that to him. Of course war was different now. Only tanks were armored. While the German Uhlans, he had heard, still carried lances, they seemed disinclined to chivalry. As for artillery officers, they had been deprived even of swords, good blades to carve the casques of men. Still at least one could ride, booted and spurred, into the fray upon a tall steed that spurned the earth and snorted with the lust of battle.

"Small, sir?" Sergeant Quinn broke in on his musings. "She's no gi-raffe. But I'm telling the Lieutenant she's the best mount in the regiment."

"Nobody'd know better than you, Sergeant."

"I'll not deny it, sir, and it's something we'd better be keeping dark. Once 'tis known, the Lieutenant'll be ranked out of her. We'll be letting the other officers pick their mounts first. Besides, the mare ain't ready for the Lieutenant yet. She's being trained by a Texas lad—only a rookie but he knows horses."

Mike Quinn had taken care that Jim

Thomas should be far from the picket line at this moment and never suspect his perfidy.

Brent was convinced.

"Thanks, Sergeant," he said. "I'll not forget the favor."

The training of the mare was conducted with infinite gentleness and patience by the unsuspecting Jim Thomas. Well aware that her previous education had been a rough and ready affair, he treated her much as he would a green horse. Often he fed her by hand with wisps of hay or grass. He never made any sudden movement near her. For every lesson she learned he rewarded her with food. While Quinn watched with professional admiration, the Texan grasped a lock of the mare's mane with one hand and ran the other slowly down a leg until she was ready to allow him to raise and clean her hoofs. She lost her head-shyness because he was careful not to force the bit into her mouth and not to hurt her ears when he drew the bridle over them. In chill weather he warmed the bit with his hands and it was always bright and clean, a fact which the mare seemed to appreciate. He leaned on her back with his elbow and patted her neck before he ventured to mount. When it was time to saddle up, he put blanket and saddle on and off repeatedly until she became accustomed to them and no longer jerked away.

Naturally docile, the mare responded rapidly. Before long Quinn, with no misgivings whatever, sent Thomas out to ride her with the battery. Thomas's pride in the little chestnut grew. She carried him through the long, hardening marches the batteries took to teach drivers and horses their jobs. She graduated to mounted drill where, fast and handy, she could wheel on a dime like a polo pony. Often Thomas noticed Lieutenant Brent watching the mare admiringly. Perhaps, the Texan reflected, that young officer wasn't such a greenhorn after all.

FOR HIS part, Lieutenant Brent longed for the day when the mare would be his. The mount he was riding was heavy-gaited and inclined to stumble. The confounded nag might fall with him some day in front of a galloping battery; vividly imagining it, Brent could almost feel the iron wheels of the carriages making a rut through his chest. On that sure-footed little mare a man could ride gloriously. He was beginning to feel the dash and *elan* of the Field Artillery, modern though it was. Guns and caissons thundering along in clouds of dust like the smoke of battle. The red guidon with its golden crossed cannon, a veritable oriflamme, snapping in the wind. The battery commander's outflung fist, the blare of a bugle, shrill whistle blasts, and shouts of "Action front!" Teams wheeling about and pulled to a halt with a rattle of single-trees and toggle chains. Cannoneers jumping from the carriages, unlimbering, preparing for action. Horses and limbers galloping to the rear. A string of commands and swift activity behind the gun shields. "Fire!" The roar of a volley, and yonder over the distant targets the white puffs of bursting shrapnel.

So it happened that Brent no longer regretted that mêlées of mailed knights were things of the past. He read now in drill regs. and treatises on conduct of fire and tales of artillery and artillerymen of his own land. Of staunch old Henry Knox, Washington's chief of artillery, and his young battery commanders who did well after the war, too, in government jobs—chaps named Madison and Monroe and Alexander Hamilton. Of Sergeant Molly Pitcher, who manned her fallen husband's gun at Monmouth. Of O'Brien and his Bulldogs, the bronze muzzle-loading cannon that raked Mexican battlefields from Buena Vista to Chapultepec. Of gallant Cushing and Hunt, who wore the Blue in '61 and the dashing gray horse artillery of Pellham and Pegram. Of Capron's Battery in the Indian wars, of Grimes' in Cuba and Reilly's in China.

Behind the artillery lay history, ancient, honorable and fascinating. Why, it was artillery, Brent read, that invented the cigarette. When an Egyptian gun squad at the Siege of Acre lost the only pipe it possessed in a shell explosion, one of the cannoneers, craving a smoke, had taken a spill—the twist of paper used

to wrap a powder train—filled it with tobacco and lit up. In the olden times the great cannon were christened and handsomely embossed with the names of any of the Twelve Apostles—excepting always Judas, which in view of the cannons' treacherous propensity to burst would have been tempting Fate. And one day Brent learned from one of the older officers that the artillery boasted a patron saint of its own.

FULL of the discovery, he hurried down to the picket line. The chestnut mare was receiving a thorough grooming from Thomas, the Texas lad who had been training her.

Sergeant Quinn, standing nearby, saluted.

"Got a name for the mare at last, Sergeant," Brent announced.

Quinn made frantic motions for silence, pointing toward Thomas. But the lieutenant, eyes on the mare, failed to notice. Quinn began talking fast to cover up.

"A name? Fine, sir. Every horse in the battery oughter be christened. Don't know how we happened to forget this here one."

"The mare deserves a good one," Brent hurried on. "And I've got it. We'll call her Santa Barbara."

"After that town in California, sir?" asked Quinn, still making unseen grimaces.

"No, after the original of the name. Beautiful maiden named Barbara who got to be a saint. What's more, the patron saint of the artillery since the Middle Ages."

"There's times, sir," the stable sergeant muttered, "when the artillery could do with a saint."

"I don't doubt it," Brent laughed. "But listen to the story of Santa Barbara. She lived 'way back in the old days. Had a father, an onery old heathen. He shut her up in a tower. Didn't want her either to get married or get religion. But in spite of him, a missionary in disguise got into the tower and converted Barbara to Christianity."

"*Dominus vobiscum,*" declared Sergeant Quinn unexpectedly.

"Same to you, Sergeant," said Lieutenant Brent. "But her father found out. He had the poor girl beaten and tortured. Barbara endured it all with courage and would not give up her faith. Then her father drove her out to the top of a mountain, drew his sword and with his own hands struck off her head!"

"Why," Sergeant Quinn broke in, "The old son—"

"All of that, Sergeant. But Barbara, martyred, became a saint."

"Rest her soul," murmured Sergeant Quinn.

"Amen," responded the lieutenant. "But that's not all the story. When the old man started down the mountain, black clouds gathered and a storm broke. It thundered like a rolling barrage. Then, as a poet puts it:

'The dread artillery of Heaven flashed.'

A bolt of lightning streaked down!"

"Fine!" roared Sergeant Quinn. "Got the old—"

"Right. Got him. A direct hit. The old heathen dropped in his tracks. So that's the history of how Barbara became the patron saint of the artillery."

Lieutenant Brent observed with some pleasure that he had held his audience. He looked at the bronzed recruit by the mare's side and asked:

"Santa Barbara. Think it's a good name for the mare, soldier?"

"Maybe Barbara for short, sir."

"Sure."

"It's a good name," the Texan decided. "There's real stuff in her. Reckon you could count on her when the time came."

"Hum," murmured Brent. "You could, I'm sure. Barbara it is, then."

Brent felt it would be decent, now, to show appreciation of the way the mare had been trained. He said:

"By the way, the captain's on the sick list and wants me to exercise his horse. I'm taking drill this afternoon. Guidon bearer's sick, too. Thomas, if Sergeant Quinn can teach you your post and how to change the guide, you can carry the stick today. And ride the mare."

DRILL went well that afternoon. The battery, pretty well shaken down, swung handily from column of sections into front into line. It took up a trot, and, obeying Lieutenant Brent's pointed finger, the guidon bearer swept across the battery front from right to left flank. The mare at a dead gallop was all grace and rhythm, and Jim Thomas sat his saddle as if he grew there. "Countermarch!" came the order, still at a trot. The sections turned about handsomely, executing the difficult maneuver.

"Right wheel, ho!" Brent shouted, with a horizontal sweep of his arm, and the section chiefs echoed him. The left of the line where the red guidon streamed broke into the gallop. Around in a great arc swept the long front of teams and gun carriages, pivoting on the right. But at that pace the interval between sections quickly widened, and the front expanded. Too late Brent saw that the left flank would swing too close for comfort to a fence at the edge of the field. The clatter drowned the blasts of his whistle, and dust hid his arm signals. Down on the fence dashed the outer teams, bearing right sharply now, horses and drivers leaning inward at a sharp angle. Helpless, cursing the folly of the risk he had taken, Brent could only watch.

In those few seconds he estimated that the outmost section would manage the turn just inside the fence. But never the guidon bearer. Nothing could slip through that narrow space remaining. Horse and rider were doomed to be crushed between the gun team and the fence.

In or out of action, a certain number of fatal accidents occur in the field artillery, some avoidable, some inevitable. A girth slips or a harness strap, not properly cleaned and oiled, snaps, or a cannoneer is jolted from his seat on a limber. For the men prone on the ground, the heavy carriages following are cars of the Juggernaut. A defective shell or some obstruction in the gun barrel causes a muzzle burst, and the gun squad lie mangled around the shattered piece. But this evolution Lieutenant Brent had ordered was a grandstand play, a drill

hall maneuver for a veteran outfit. Too late he realized he never should have tried it at a gallop, that his guide should have been at the pivotal flank. Far from the front, he had sent a good man and a good horse to a needless, inglorious death. He tried to shut his eyes and could not.

He saw the red guidon fluttering above the dust cloud as if in farewell. Then it swung sharply outward, leaped upward. Beneath it appeared a glimpse of olive drab uniform and chestnut hide. At a difficult angle, the mare soared over that three-rail fence like a bird. On the other side, Thomas wheeled her, put her at the fence again, cleared it and galloped back to his post.

"Santa Barbara!" gasped Lieutenant Brent. It sounded like a prayer. "Walk! Halt!"

Brent soberly led the battery back to camp. He glanced back once at the column where, to the left of the chief of the first section, Thomas proudly grasped the guidon and Barbara's reins. Brent's lips moved and he murmured to himself:

"She was iron-sinew'd and satin-skinn'd,
Ribb'd like a drum and limb'd like a deer,
Fierce as the fire and fleet as the wind—
There was nothing she couldn't climb or clear."

BRENT stayed on the line after grooming to beg Jim Thomas' pardon for the rash order that had risked his life and the mare's. No hard feelings, Thomas told him; it had all come out all right. The two men, standing there together and beaming at Barbara, liked and understood each other.

"Thomas," Lieutenant Brent said,—"Sergeant Quinn did me a great favor when he picked out Barbara for me, You've done a grand job training her and I appreciate it. Even though I'm taking her for my mount, I'll be wanting you to take care of her and ride her often."

The gray eyes of the Texan had turned hard. "Quinn—picked her for you?" he jerked out. "Why, she's mine! The dirty—"

The officer's eyes grew hard in turn.

"That's enough, Private Thomas!" This was a matter of discipline. "You surely didn't expect to keep as good a horse as this for yourself, a buck private. If I didn't take her, some other officer would. You're in the Army now."

Barbara turned her head and regarded the two men in a puzzled fashion. They looked at her, then glared back at each other. Jim Thomas clamped his firm mouth shut. Brent, red-faced, strode away.

Stable Sergeant Michael Quinn looked up to see a menacing figure in the door of his tent.

"You dirty, double-crossing son," shouted Jim Thomas.

"Aisy now," Quinn soothed. "Them's hard words."

"Brent's taken my horse." The Texan's voice was dangerously flat. "You planned it all along. You knew I was keen about that little mare. You got me into this damned Army by a lousy, low-down trick!"

"It was time you was in the Army anyhow."

"It was, was it? Thought I ought to be doing some fighting, did you? Well, if you weren't an older man—"

"So it's that way," the sergeant growled. "So you think I'm too old for a bit of argument? I'm shedding my chevrons, see?" He stripped off his shirt. "Step on over back of the picket line."

Sergeant Michael Quinn was sporting two black eyes that evening. And Private Jim Thomas, relieved as stable orderly, was beginning a long tour of duty at kitchen police in grim silence.

CHAPTER III

OFFICER'S CALL

IN other camps, field artillery regiments were drilling on mock guns: stovepipes mounted on cart wheels. They lacked even horses, so tremendous had been the demand from the Allies, and they were using oversize saw-horses in attempts to teach recruits a little of sitting a saddle

and harnessing. It was the old, old story of the United States entering a war, unready, ill-equipped.

Not so for the regiment in the Virginia encampment. It was destined to form part of a regular division, parts of which already were in France, and it rejoiced in its full complement of twenty-four three-inch guns, with accompanying caissons, limbers, supply wagons, and fire control instruments, eked out of the scanty Government stores, and all the multitude of spare parts and other articles required by the tables of organization. It was blessed with all the thousand or so horses and mules a field artillery regiment at war strength should have, and they were splendid animals.

The fall of 1917 waned into the winter. Anxiety grew in nearby Washington. Neither news from overseas or visible evidence indicated that America was doing much more in this war than mark time. Secretary Bryan had declared that a million men would spring to arms over night. The men would spring—or be drafted—but production of arms was another matter. While plenty of uniforms, worn by officers on staff duty, were apparent in Washington, there was little evidence of armed activity. It seemed high time the nation's capital saw some troops marching as to war.

Therefore on a bright, frosty morning, furbished and polished to a farethewell, the –th Field Artillery stood to horse. The bugles sang, and mounted men swung into saddles and cannoneers to carriage seats. Along the Virginia roads and over the District of Columbia line the long column rolled.

Johnny Brent, riding beside his platoon, cocked his campaign hat at an old-timer's angle. Settling his automatic against his hip, he pulled down the skirts of his overcoat and glanced proudly at the red numerals of the regiment on his saddle-cloth. Barbara, skittish with spirits, arched her neck and danced to the music of the bugles. At the sound of hoofs behind, Brent had to rein in tightly or she would have galloped to the head of the column. Colonel Mack, riding up with his adjutant, spoke:

"You can manage that mare, can't you, Mr. Brent?"

"Yes, sir."

"There will be no runaways in this parade," the C.O. announced sternly. "In the victory parade here in Washington after the Civil War the mount of General Custer bolted. They say it was a magnificent sight. Custer, with his yellow hair streaming and his horse at a dead gallop, stole the show. There's some doubt whether it was an accident. However, Custer got away with it. He was a general. But a second lieutenant—"

The military mustache bristled, and the colonel rode on.

Now the regiment was swinging into Pennsylvania Avenue, and the band blared forth with all the capacity of its lungs. The famous thoroughfare echoed to stirring strains written long ago in the Philippines by a young artillery lieutenant who loved his arm of the service —"The Caisson Song."

"Over hill, over dale,
We have hit the dusty trail,
And those caissons go rolling along."

IT WAS only one regiment of field artillery, but it was a gallant sight. The long column stretching down the Avenue—the grim, business-like guns of the firing batteries, the ammunition sections, the mule-drawn, canvas-covered supply wagons, reminiscent of the prairie schooners of the pioneers—the few older officers and sergeants who had seen action in past wars and the set, earnest faces of the young men who were still to stand fire—the teams of willing horses, shoulders in their collars, doing their share. In full blast, the band played on.

"Then it's hi! hi! hee!
The Field Artillery.
Sound off your numbers loud and strong.
Where e'er you go,
You will always know
That those caissons are rolling along."

Johnny Brent's knees gripped his mount. He could sense that she felt it, too,—the heart-lifting summons of this martial music, prelude to battle. This parade was the beginning of a long march

which would bring the regiment in the face of the enemy in faraway France. Then, under the conditions of modern warfare, the band would be silent, the musicians serving as stretcher-bearers. But as it played now, so must the 7th Cavalry's brass have blared "Garry Owen" on a bitter cold day back in the '70's when Custer charged a Cheyenne village on the Washita—playing the Seventh into action until instruments froze.

The music ceased. The regiment turned homeward.

Back in camp again, Lieutenant Brent rode toward his battery area. They were passing the mess hall. Outside the kitchen a man sat peeling potatoes. Barbara craned her neck toward him and whinnied. Jim Thomas grinned at her; then his gaze shifted to the man on her back, and there was hatred in his level, scowling stare.

While Brent was standing back of the picket line supervising the grooming, he saw Barbara's ears go up again. A second later he identified the distant sound she had caught as the sputter of a motorcycle speeding into camp. After an interval a bugle sounded *Officers' Call.*

"Hey!" Sergeant Quinn exclaimed with sudden interest. "Somethin's up! The Lieutenant had better be dusting over to Headquarters."

At Headquarters, the officers of the regiment faced Colonel Mack eagerly. His cold eyes moved over them slowly; he allowed a period of tantalizing silence to elapse. Then with the slow, precise diction he used so that no one could claim to have misunderstood him, he spoke:

"Gentlemen, I have received the following secret and confidential orders" . . .

Orders overseas! At last! The colonel spoke on unhurriedly. Entrainment in two days for a port of embarkation—meaning Hoboken. Guns and other wheeled equipment to be turned in. The regiment would be given the splendid French 75 mm. guns on the other side. Abruptly the speaker broke off.

"And the horses, sir?" a major asked.

"I regret to say," Colonel Mack resumed gravely, "that they are to be turned in. Tomorrow a remount detail will pick them up for shipment overseas from Baltimore. Whether we'll get them back on the other side, I don't know. I'll do what I can. They're fine animals, and we've trained them well. Too bad but—That will be all, gentlemen."

Lieutenant Brent strode excitedly back to his tent. Off to war at last. What news that was! Though it was a damned shame about the horses. Tough to lose Barbara.

There was a scratch on his tent flap. On his invitation the new stable orderly entered and reported that Stable Sergeant Quinn requested the lieutenant's presence on the line to look over a horse with colic. Brent grinned. Quinn was only after the news, but the officer walked down to the line.

Quinn's face was bright with expectation.

"We're off, ain't we, sir?" he asked. "Hope it ain't no latrine rumor this time."

"Sergeant Quinn, I have nothing to say except that the grapevine in this outfit works like lightning. By the way, if we ever did get orders overseas, I understand we'd have to turn in our horses."

Quinn swore. "Ain't that the Army for yuh? After all the training we done on 'em! Any chance of our gitting 'em back over there?"

"One in a thousand. Can't tell whether they'll go to an American, French or British outfit. We might never get any horses. I heard tell we might even be motorized."

Quinn's eyes turned heavenward. "The saints preserve us from the likes of that!" he prayed.

THE tang of the sea and all the distinct smells of the waterfront filled the nostrils of the horses, led down to the docks. Here were smells and sights and sounds utterly unfamiliar to them. And yet they may have felt such vague, faint stirrings of memory, as a man does sometimes in strange surroundings—a tingling in the veins which seems to say: "Here have I, or some of the same blood as I, passed before."

So they went down to the sea in ships, retracing a voyage their ancestors had made. The big steamship waiting to embark them testified to their vital impor-

tance. Provision must be made for them, no less than for troops and munitions, out of shipping desperately limited through sinkings by German submarines. A horse requires ten tons of cargo space, and this vessel, which carried five hundred animals, might have transported ten times as many men. Its assignment to the willing animals that kept the caissons rolling along was a real tribute.

The mare and all the other horses selected for shipment had been given the invaluable Mallein test for glanders; animals with a positive reaction had been hastily isolated to prevent the spreading of the disease. A group of veterinaries closely examined the chestnut mare and the rest, taking temperatures, noting pulses, counting respirations and palpitating various glands. No more thorough a going-over was given soldiers entering the service.

Now, on the day of embarkation, Barbara was led toward a steel crane. Nervously she submitted while men fastened under her belly something that felt like an extra large surcingle. It was a sling of webbing. The men stepped back and signaled. With a raucous whirring and grinding, the engine of the crane started, and the terrified mare was swept up toward the sky. For an awful moment she hung between heaven and hell. Then she descended into the black depths of the hold where, unslung, she was led panting into a stall and tied.

She may well have believed she was in hell during the twenty days of that stormy voyage. The rolling and pitching of the ship made it hard for her to keep her feet, and often she was afraid to lie down. With hatches battened down, the air, bad enough anyway with disinfectant and the ammoniacal odor of dung, grew almost unbearably foul, and there was no blower system. A seasick horse detail, struggling to water and feed with bran and hay, could do little about cleaning up the stalls. That lower deck became a shambles.

But Barbara was lucky. It was on the drafty upper deck that pneumonia broke out. While strenuous efforts by a capable veterinary controlled it to some extent, more than twenty carcasses went over the side.

Perhaps it was some of the carcasses, which broke loose from weights and floated to the surface, that betrayed the convoy. Perhaps it was a gleam of light aboard a ship, or the thump of engines through the sea. Whatever the betrayal that night in the Irish Channel, a torpedo crashed into the vessel ahead of the horse transport. The U-boat captain, finger on trigger, lined his sights on the steamer following for the load in his second tube.

Down on the lower deck, the horses sensed the fear that swept through the ship. Barbara, flung from one side of her stall to the other by the zigzag course, snorted in panic. Half muffled, ominous, the booms of rapid gunfire penetrated to the hold. If any men had been confined in that gloom, bound and helpless, the horror of their impending fate might have driven them mad. Mercifully, the horses could only vaguely sense threatening danger. Spared the curse of human imagination, they could not envision water flooding in and submerging them while, wild-eyed and struggling, they tugged at ropes and iron rings as their prison sank with them to the bottom of the sea. How narrowly that doom was escaped was measured by a foaming, white wake a few yards astern where a torpedo rushed by.

When the ship ceased shaking under the reverberation of depth charges, dropped by escorting destroyers, Barbara gradually quieted. Her experience in the sling when she was hoisted aboard remained her most fearsome memory.

She was forced to endure that ordeal again when the convoy docked safely at Brest. Disembarked, overjoyed at being on land once more, the column of horses was led toward a remount depot. They shied when trucks rumbled past them, but when drays, drawn by huge French Percherons, passed, some of the heavy wheel horses in the column neighed a friendly greeting, for here were kin. Their own line had been bred from Percheron stallions, imported to the United States and crossed with native stock.

ON the same day the horses were landed at Brest, the troop transport carrying Barbara's regiment docked at Le Harve. Marched through a dismal drizzle of

rain, the regiment was quartered in a so-called rest camp on a wind-swept hill. In the orderly room in the front of the headquarters hut, a smart-looking soldier was on duty. The cord of artillery red around his campaign hat was neat and unfaded. His uniform had been refitted to him by the battery tailor. The lamplight glistened on the polish of his pistol holster and the leather inset in his canvas leggins.

Jim Thomas tilted back in a camp chair, having just saluted a staff officer from G.H.Q. and ushered him in to see Colonel Mack.

"So we're to entrain for Valdahon," he heard the colonel's distinct accents. "Where is that?"

"South of France. French artillery school," the staff man answered. "Your regiment will train there on the 75's."

The colonel's next words made Thomas sit up suddenly.

"We had a fine lot of horses in the States," said the colonel. "It's entirely possible they may have been shipped over just about this time. We probably could identify most of them. I would like to prefer a request that those horses of ours be reassigned to us."

Thomas, listening harder than ever, bit his lip at the staff officer's next words.

"Sorry, sir. You'll be issued no horses until your regiment's training at Valdahon has been completed. In spite of all we've shipped, horses are badly needed right now. Spain is being scoured for 'em. Our Allies want every nag they can lay hands on. When we get more troops over here, the French promise to turn over all the animals they can, and the British say they'll spare us a pair from every team of theirs, if necessary."

"I see," the colonel said.

"As for that lot of yours, if they're here, they'll go into the pool, and God knows what will become of 'em," the staff officer finished.

With a helpless gesture, Private Thomas slumped back in his seat.

STRANGERS, always strangers. Barbara, ill at ease, looked continually for the men she had grown to know—Thomas, Lieutenant Brent, Sergeant Quinn. They had been good to her, and the mass herding and casual care she since had received did nothing to ease her homesickness for them. The affections of a horse are slower to be caught than those of a dog and are always less apparent, for the dog has all but speech, particularly in the eloquence of its tail. Yet a horse, given love and understanding, makes known that its own are pledged in return, even unto death. So it was when General Lee's iron-gray charger, Traveller, led in procession to his master's grave, lowered his muzzle to the flower-covered bier and whinnied a last farewell.

The mare, cut out of the herd with a number of other single mounts to fill out a consignment on a French purchase, was transferred to the cavalry.

It was a proud old regiment she joined. Its squadrons had thundered in review before the great Napoleon, and its banners were blazoned with his victories. In every war since, it had acquitted itself honorably, even in the disastrous defeat of 1870. In this war it had helped turn back the Germans at the Marne. Although later stabilization of the front by trench warfare had relegated all cavalry to the rear areas much of the time, this regiment never had ceased to serve strenuously. Courier duty, guarding prisoners and trench digging had fallen to its lot. Thrice with high hopes it had ridden forward, ready to charge through an expected gap in the enemy's front—breakthroughs that never came. It was on the second of those occasions that the regiment, concentrated in a wood, had been caught by shellfire and suffered the heavy casualties that required the present replacements in men and horses.

Again Barbara found herself on a picket line where a choice of mounts was being made. Neither she nor the other horses showed up well after the voyage and the boxcar trip to the French cavalry depot.

"They send us their dregs now, the Americans," ran mutters of men inspecting the line.

At last an arm in horizon blue reached forward to untie Barbara.

"Here, Vallon," called a troop commander. "Best choose this mare."

A heavy-set man advanced. Middle-aged, he wore the chevrons of an aspir-

ant, a grade between non-commissioned rank and lieutenant; there were not a few older men in junior ranks in the French Army. He was continually wetting his lips under his heavy mustache, and in back of his eyes was a hunted look.

"Must I ride that little insect, *mon Capitaine?*"

"She'll carry you," his superior promised. "There's good blood in her. Besides, there is little choice left."

"For want of a better, then," Vallon grumbled and beckoned a trooper to lead the mare away.

On his own troop's line, the *aspirant* again examined his mount with growing disfavor.

"Such is the beast left to me after the officers of St. Cyr skim the cream," he growled. "Behold my charger! Species of a camel!"

His anger climbed. Glaring at Barbara, he spat at her slender forelegs and cried hoarsely:

"You'll carry me, will you? You'd best or I'll beat the life out of you!"

He swung back his arm and slapped the mare heavily on the side of the head.

Barbara, eyes rolling, sprang back, tugging against her tie-rope.

In a doorway, two troopers, a veteran and a recruit, were watching. The recruit started forward.

"The dirty pig!" he exclaimed.

"Be tranquil," warned the veteran, pulling him back. "Learn never to interfere with an officer, my little one. Also you do not know about Vallon. When a Boche shell bursts beside you, as by him, you may understand."

"Shell-shocked!" the recruit whispered.

"But yes. He cannot always keep control of himself. Yet he continues to serve."

"I pity the horse," said the recruit curtly.

"*C'est la guerre,*" the other man shrugged.

PITY could not help the mare. She was at the mercy of a man whose tortured nerves vented themselves in outbursts of cruelty. Vallon should have been in the hospital, but the shell which had exploded so near him had given him no visible wound. He would have no one calling him a coward or an *embusqué,* so he stayed on duty. Every day he grew more tense, irritable, suspicious of slights. His overwrought nerves communicated themselves to the finely-strung mount. Barbara never felt the too-heavy body of the *aspirant* settle in the saddle that she did not wince in anticipation of the mistreatment she had come to expect.

The mare tried hard, nevertheless. Quickly she picked up cavalry drill, though she missed the rumbling of the guns and caissons. She learned not to shy at the rasp and flash of drawn sabres. When the band played the martial measures of the *Sambre et Meuse* or the mounted bugle corps tossed their instruments high in the air, caught them and sounded a flourish, Barbara almost recaptured her gayety and began to curvet. Then the bit would jerk savagely in her tender mouth and sharp spurs dig into her flanks, as Vallon cursed her and the noise.

True it is that horses of the Arab blood, with its trait of intelligence, are docile and faithful when kindly handled. Under cruelty, their finely-wrought nervous systems rebel, and they become untractable and vicious. Or, their spirits broken, they sicken and die. By the barbarities of her shell-shocked master, Barbara was doomed to one fate or the other, and it drew closer with every dismal day.

CHAPTER IV

BATTLE STATIONS

THE roads through the ancient forest were like dank, dark corridors in a dungeon. Rain filtered through the leaves of oaks and beeches, their branches deepening the gloom of a moonless night. Marching men moved soggily, each with a hand on the shoulder ahead to maintain contact in the blackness.

Up to the front again. It was an old story now to Lieut. John Brent, riding at the head of his battery's combat train, so long ago it seemed that the regiment had left Valdahon and first gone into the line, although that was in March and this was only mid-July. Stirring ac-

tion had been packed into those weeks. First the quiet sector east of Verdun, which had livened up considerably; then the terrific fighting at Belleau Wood, when the German drive had been halted and rolled back; and now, after a brief rest, a forced march of two nights and a day to take part in an attack which gave every evidence of being another big show.

What turmoil the primeval Forêt de Retz hid in its depths that night! Thousands upon thousands of troops, their guns, tanks, trucks, and ambulances, jamming and clogging and pressing on again through its tunnel-like roads. There streamed the units of two veteran divisions of American regulars. Between them, to form with them the spearhead of the attack, marched the famous First Moroccan Division of the French with its dreaded Moors and black Senegalese and the fierce Foreign Legion.

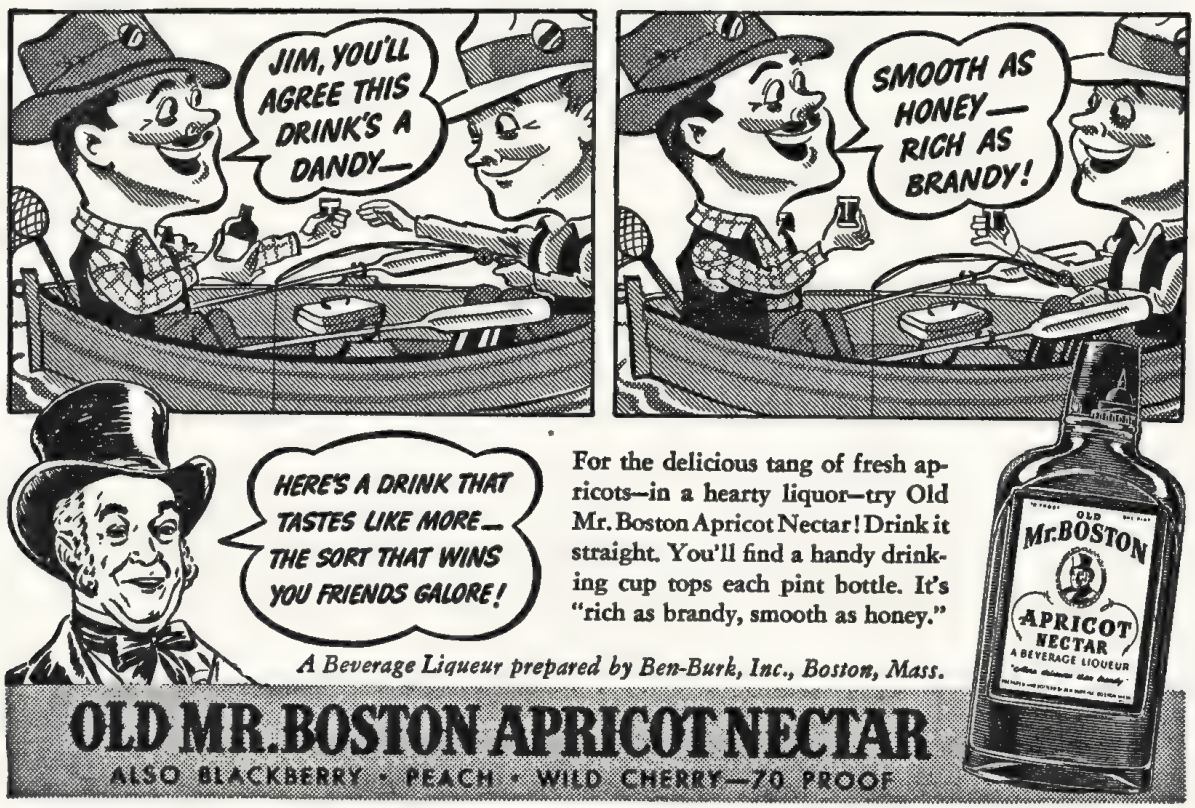
Part of a far-flung battle line, they strove onward, cursing and blessing the darkness that hampered them and concealed them from the unsuspecting foe. Swiftly the night dwindled toward dawn. At the edge of the forest, Brent with a thrill of admiration watched a company of Marines of his division swing in from another road. Exhausted men, but pushing forward at a run in order to reach their jump-off point for the attack on time.

The artillery was ready, in position. Behind a crest stretched a long line of 75's, almost hub-to-hub, and in rear of them, ready to fire over them, were ranked the 155 mm. howitzers. For miles along the eastern face of the forest and to its flanks, ranged this tremendous concentration of cannon. Back of the field pieces, crews manned the heavier guns and railroad artillery, and forward were emplaced trench mortars, one-pounders, heavy and light machine-guns. Loaded, unseen, black muzzles with death in their throats gaped toward the German lines, awaiting the hour.

Beside "D" Battery, Brent saw Captain Carrick waving him on.

"Unload those shells and fuses in a hurry," the battery commander ordered. "We open fire in fifteen minutes. Get back to the reserve dump fast as you can

MR. BOSTON SAYS: "RARE ENJOYMENT FOR YOU IN MY APRICOT NECTAR!"


JIM, YOU'LL AGREE THIS DRINK'S A DANDY—
SMOOTH AS HONEY— RICH AS BRANDY!
HERE'S A DRINK THAT TASTES LIKE MORE— THE SORT THAT WINS YOU FRIENDS GALORE!
For the delicious tang of fresh apricots—in a hearty liquor—try Old Mr. Boston Apricot Nectar! Drink it straight. You'll find a handy drinking cup tops each pint bottle. It's "rich as brandy, smooth as honey."
OLD Mr. BOSTON
APRICOT NECTAR
A BEVERAGE LIQUEUR
A Beverage Liqueur prepared by Ben-Burk, Inc., Boston, Mass.
OLD MR. BOSTON APRICOT NECTAR
ALSO BLACKBERRY • PEACH • WILD CHERRY—70 PROOF

and bring up more ammunition. We'll be moving forward and we'll need it."

Brent took his empty caissons back at a gallop. In the woods he glanced at his wrist watch. It was 4:34. One minute more. Time seemed suspended in a breathless hush. Somewhere in the depth of the forest a bird started to sing—a long, trilling note that never was finished.

Ten thousand thunderclaps reverberated at once. The earth and the air shook under the shattering, deafening concussion of those massed guns roaring into action. The infantry sprang to their feet and plunged forward. Before them rolled the barrage, rending and smashing at the German trenches. The battle of Soissons had begun.

Never afterwards could Johnny Brent bring back more than fragmentary, jumbled memories out of the smoke and confusion of that great battle which was the turning point of the war. Its panorama unrolled like a swiftly-run motion picture reel. For this was open warfare, with the guns no longer standing fast in emplacements and firing by the map. Batteries galloped forward, unlimbered and with open sights poured volleys into the retreating enemy.

Forward, always forward. Constant calls for more ammunition. Brent and the combat train, following the guns, passed long, field gray columns of prisoners, herded to the rear. Yet vengefully, stubbornly the Germans fought back with machine-guns and artillery. Up ahead Brent watched "C" Battery climb over a crest. No sooner had its young commander showed against the skyline than the blinding flash of a bursting shell enveloped him. "A battery seen is a battery lost," runs an old artillery maxim. But the first section chief, taking command, wheeled the column back under cover.

Now the path of the advance was strewn with dead and wounded. The combat train, threading its way between them, must drive with infinite care and skill. Magnificently the horses, frightened though they were by the shells bursting around them, responded to rein and pressure of leg. Once a riderless steed, galloping toward the train for company in its terror, was struck by a shell fragment fifty metres away and dropped, kicking in agony. Brent never forgot how Corporal Thomas swung down from his saddle as the train passed at a gallop and put a bullet from his automatic between the suffering animal's eyes.

SURPRISED and overwhelmed, the German Army, that splendid fighting machine, was giving way before the spirited assault of the American and French divisions. Back ebbed the disorganized German battle line until the attacking battalions, fast though they moved, could no longer maintain touch. In the Allied posts of command, where breathless runners brought reports, they spoke elatedly of a real break-through.

It was then that Lieutenant Brent, on his way forward late in the afternoon with yet more ammunition, glanced back over his shoulder at the edge of the Foret de Retz and beheld an unforgettable spectacle. Emerging from the screen of the trees were long lines of horsemen, a brigade of French cavalry. They came on at a trot, regiments of lancers and dragoons in column of squadrons, wave on wave of horizon blue. Fresh and trim, riding as if on parade, they swept ahead, ranks opening to pass the American combat train's weary drivers and foam-flecked teams. So, thought Johnny Brent, must the Light Brigade have looked, advancing to launch its historic charge at Balaklava.

The rearmost troop was passing now, and Brent found himself gaping at a French officer, an old man, among the file closers. His body was rigid; his face, set like a mask, was ghastly white. Unseeing eyes, haunted by some unspeakable terror, stared straight ahead.

A salvo of shrapnel burst overhead, too far to the rear to do any harm. But Brent saw the receding figure of the Frenchman shudder convulsively. He spurred his mount violently, and when the animal leaped forward, reined in savagely, sawing against its mouth.

Brent gasped. Hoofs clattered behind him, and Corporal Thomas was beside him, his gray eyes burning.

"Did you see her?" he demanded. "See what he done to her?"

"See *her?* What the devil do you—"

"Barbara! That's Barbara he's riding! I'd know her anywhere. By God, I'm going to knock that yellow-bellied dog off her!"

"Steady!" the lieutenant spoke sharply. "We don't know it's Barbara. Anyway, she's a French horse now." He grasped the other's bridle.

"Leggo, you!" Thomas shouted, tugging. "I'll—"

"You'll nothing!" That was big First Sergeant McNally who had ridden up on the off side of the corporal. "Get back to your post!"

For a moment Thomas glared wildly at them both. Then, deadly white, he dropped back.

THE mass of cavalry, nearing the infantry supports, was still in view. The intent artillerymen saw an officer in the van raise an arm. The sun glistened on something slender in his hand. An instant, and that gleam of light was multiplied by a thousand drawn sabres, rising above a falling forest of a thousand lowered, leveled lances.

"Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air" . . .

murmured Johnny Brent, thrilled to the core.

At a gallop the cavalry lunged forward in the charge. They vanished in the field of tall wheat where the front line lay.

"A break-through!" exclaimed the battery commander excitedly. "Send for the limbers. If that cavalry rolls 'em up, we're going straight through to Berlin!"

The last, faint cheer of the charging horsemen seemed still to be lingering in the air when a sinister sound succeeded it. A deadly, distant staccato, as of innumerable pneumatic riveters.

There would be no break-through. Not while German machine-guns remained uncaptured.

Lieutenant Brent was thankful he could not witness that slaughter. Too well could he visualize streams of lead thudding into the ranks of those gallant squadrons, men reeling in their saddles, horses rearing, plunging and going down. Here and there, a machine-gun nest was ridden down and gunners lanced and sabered, but always from flank and front came the murderous fire from still more guns.

Back through the wheat rode the cavalry—"all that was left of them"—riders with shoulders slumped, troop horses with emptied saddles keeping their place in ranks. Brent could spare them barely a glance, for the battery had flamed into rapid action, taking vengeance on the machine-guns, and the German artillery was replying with gas shells mixed with high explosive.

The combat train had been moving slowly to the rear, conserving the strength of the teams. Jim Thomas looked back to see the remnants of the cavalry retreating toward the forest. He scanned every horse with fierce eagerness.

Off to the right on the flank of a shattered troop he saw a little chestnut in a group of riderless horses.

This time the first sergeant was not quick enough to stop him. He sped away at a dead gallop. As he bore down on them, the French horses also began to run.

The few, dazed, surviving cavalrymen in the group, anxious to reach the shelter of the woods, did not rein in.

Now Thomas was alongside his quarry. It was Barbara without a doubt. Kicking loose from his stirrups, he leaned over toward the running mare and seized her mane and the high pommel of her saddle.

The edge of the woods was close now. The galloping horses began to open ranks raggedly to thread their way through the trees.

The Texan gathered himself. As his horse and Barbara drew apart, he swung over into her saddle. Pulling her up, he turned her and trotted back to the combat train, bending down to pat her neck.

"You damn deserter!" the first sergeant rasped at him. "It's the nearest tree for you."

Thomas looked at him apprehensively, but there was a warm gleam in McNally's icy blue eyes.

"Yep, the nearest tree and a rope," the big man repeated. "A Texas hoss thief always gits strung up, don't he?"

Back rode the cavalry—all that was left of them.

CHAPTER V

THE CHANGELING

"Now go to the stable,
All you who are able,
And give to your horses
Some oats and some corn.
For if you don't do it,
The captain will know it,
And then you will rue it,
As sure as you're born."

BUGLES, silent at the front, blew once more for the battle-worn regiment withdrawn to a rear area. They blew the flourishes of always-unwelcome *Reveille* and always-welcome *Mess Call.* They wailed the sad, sweet notes of *Taps,* blown either to summon the soldier to rest for the night or for eternity.

There were gaps on the picket lines, as in the ranks. "It was the greatest grief to think upon the horses, and the valiant soldiers we had lost." So, four centuries ago after a battle in Mexico, had written the Conquistador, Bernal Diaz, chronicler of the expedition of Cortez; and now his words were in the hearts of other fighting men in France. Animals, which had endeared themselves to the men who cared for them, had been killed in action or were dead of wounds or exhaustion. Here a sergeant mourned his lost mount and was not consoled by the prospect of a superior replacement. There a wheel driver sadly groomed a big black whose

teammate was gone; the survivor, restive and lonely, looked constantly about for the companion which had pulled in the traces at his side.

One soldier was enjoying a measure of happiness. Corporal Jim Thomas had his Barbara again. He rubbed down her chestnut coat. But she did not remember him. After he had recovered her, there had been five more terrible days in the line. He had had to ride her unsparingly. She had trembled when he mounted, cringing almost whenever he happened to raise a hand. Used to the jerk of a curb bit against her raw mouth, she was no longer bridle-wise. Yet even toward the last of the battle, when both rider and horse moved mechanically in a semi-coma of utter weariness, the little mare had responded gallantly.

Until now that they were back in a rest area, there had been no time to attempt to renew old ties. Now Thomas strove to win her back. Barbara would turn her head and look at him, but he could find no light of recognition in her eyes. Sometimes slowly, tentatively, a little doubtfully, she stretched her graceful neck toward him. Yet always she shrank away again. Brutality and battle shock had gone deep.

Swallowing his emotion, the Texan saw Stable Sergeant Quinn looking at him.

"Sure, 'tis a wonderful thing—love," the sergeant grinned. "They do say it makes the world go 'round."

"You go to hell," Thomas muttered.

"The back of me hand to you," Quinn retorted. "For all I'm caring, you can go stand a summary court and have your pay stopped a couple years for the loss of gover'mint property."

Thomas maintained his sullen silence.

"He don't know what he lost," Quinn persisted in good humor. "I'll have to be telling him. One hoss," he ticked off on his fingers, "abandoned to the French cavalry in retreat."

The Texan bore down on Barbara's withers with the brush. She shuddered and jumped. "Sorry, girl," he murmured, patting her. Then he turned angrily on the stable sergeant again.

"You've done your damage, Quinn," he said. "Just keep away from me from now on. And lay off the blarney. Don't I know that when Brent, wherever he is, shows up, he'll grab the mare away from me again? What if it was me got her back?" he demanded bitterly. "Wasn't it him and McNally wouldn't let me go after her when that Frog was roweling her like a greaser full of *mescal?*"

Quinn answered gently. "Sure, I know. But what else could he do, lad? Besides, mebbe he won't be back."

"Brent won't? Why not?"

"He got a good whiff of gas toward the end of the show. They packed him off to the hospital."

The Texan did not look sorry.

"This time, Quinn," he snapped, "I'll not be kidding myself. You can get ready to do some more bootlicking and lay up credit for doing an officer a favor."

Quinn's fists clenched, but he took it.

EXCEPT for relief from the strain of combat, there was little rest, no idle days, for the regiment. Horses must be watered, fed, groomed and exercised; harness cleaned and oiled, carriages put back into condition, replacements of casualties

received. All this activity was for the best, not only because it was necessary but because routine has a blessed effect on overwrought nerves. After regular formations and drill, there were afternoons of swimming in the river and baseball games. Mail from home arrived. So did pay day. Circles formed in the barn billets, where faint clickings and loud adjurations were heard. Now and again disconsolate soldiers rose with turned-out pockets. Up in a loft a voice sang mournfully:

"Once a month you sign the payroll.
Cap'n with a list gives you your pay.
You go in the barracks and throw it on a blanket.
Feller says 'Craps!' and takes it all away."

Inspections, signs of a forthcoming move, were made, and rumors of the next move of the division flourished like weeds. At the "D" Battery officers' mess one night, a short first lieutenant with gray hair and a ruddy, outdoor face was a guest. A "V" superimposed upon the caduces, the Medical Corps insignia, on his collar, marked him as the veterinary attached to the regiment. Recently returned from a meeting at the Tours remount depot, he was the target of his hosts' curiosity.

"Loosen up, Doc," Captain Carrick urged. "Just between us, where are we rolling next?"

"Nowhere unless we get some horse replacements," their guest replied.

"Sure, but we'll get 'em soon, won't we?"

"That depends." The vet paused significantly. "Guess I'll risk spilling some confidential stuff to you fellows. Might make you take even better care of your stock than you do."

The A.E.F.'s shortage of animals was critical, he revealed; it amounted to more than 70,000, and that was an improvement, for it had been far worse. Ships for transport across the Atlantic were increasingly scarce. Remount purchases made in Spain, in the face of the strong German influence there, had yielded only a fair supply. Animal influenza, raging since the past winter, had taken a terrific toll.

"Fact is, our animal transport situation is acute," the vet continued. "I hear that new artillery regiments back in the States are being motorized."

"There's plenty of places those caterpillar tractors can't go," a lieutenant put in. "We need horses."

"Here's a last tip for you," offered the vet, rising to go. "Our brigadier says he's heard the French are sore at our outfit. They claim we've lifted some of their nags off the picket line."

"Hell, that's the old army game," Captain Carrick snorted. "There never yet was an outfit in the mounted service that, given half a chance, didn't swipe a good horse off the next regiment's picket line and leave some old crock in its place."

"Just the same," the doctor insisted, "the brigadier is up on his ear. He's invited a Frog general over to inspect our lines and see for himself that we've got no nags that speak French. This battery, of course, will be the picture of innocence." He grinned and waved his hand. "Good evening, gentlemen, and thanks for the chow."

One second lieutenant whispered to another, "Look here. We'd better pass the word on to Sergeant Quinn. There is a neat little chestnut mare we got back at Soissons. Come on."

That night Quinn and a farrier worked long over Barbara's brand and hoof marks, translating them from French back into American. Those who know the tricks can accomplish skullduggery with a hot iron and with a little axle grease, which, filled into hoof brands, may disguise them until they are obliterated by new growth.

They did a pretty fair job. But in his heart Quinn knew it wasn't good enough —not if the inspecting Frenchmen also knew the tricks of the trade.

DOWN the main street of the village, where headquarters of the Field Artillery Brigade were located, rode a French general. His stature was small but his appearance was martial, even bellicose. Sharp eyes that missed nothing ranged ahead. A dragoon's mustache, large and

fierce, spread a canopy over a compressed mouth. Confronted by the ribbons of his decorations, a rainbow would have resigned, and rivaled by the gold braid encircling his cap, the most gorgeous sunset would have given up and called it a day. Most impressive of all was the magnificent charger he bestrode. That was sheer swank, since generals usually rode in limousines, but the mount contributed vastly to the effect and pointed the general's errand. Behind him, instead of the parade which would have been suitable, rode only a single orderly. The soldier's rubicund visage, a living testimonial to the vintages of France, was beaming.

The general halted in front of headquarters in the *mairie* and glared at the lack of a proper reception. This was unreasonable of him, since he had come an hour before he was expected, but generals are apt to be unreasonable. Plainly disgruntled, he dismounted, turned over his steed to his orderly and entered the building. Thence presently issued the voice of the American general, apologizing in bad French, and other sounds of confusion and consternation.

For some time the orderly stood to horse in a military manner. Then his roving eye noted a café across the square opening for business. He sniffed; he licked his lips. Conversation inside headquarters gave no sign of slackening, and at length the orderly surrendered. Tying the horses to a hitching bar, he disappeared inside the café.

Again the village street resounded to hoofs. Battery "D" was leading to water, a long column, drivers walking between their pairs. The French horses neighed a greeting to the head of the column.

Toward the head of the battery, Corporal Thomas was marching behind Sergeant Quinn. Simultaneously they sighted the French general's horse. They halted in their tracks and looked at each other. A light of gleeful understanding leaped into their eyes at the same moment. Jim's hostility for the stable sergeant seemed to melt away from him. Acting with perfect teamwork, Quinn ran for the general's charger while Thomas snatched at the halter-shank of the poorest horse in the battery.

Even if any of the civilians across the square had been watching, they probably could not have explained how the trick was done. The passing column masked it, as a magician uses a handkerchief to cover sleight-of-hand. The result was enough to make anyone stare and rub his eyes. When the tail of the column was past the hitching bar, there where the general's splendid steed had stood, drooped a sorry, bony nag, fit for condemnation. The changeling wore the handsome saddle and bridle which had graced its predecessor.

The battery was out of sight when the French general, accompanied by his American host, and the former's orderly emerged, respectively, from headquarters and the café. All three gasped at the poor bonerack tied to the bar beside the orderly's mount.

A sudden advance of the enemy into that rear area would have caused no wilder alarums and excursions than the wrath of the French general and the angry dismay of Old Fuss and Feathers. With a volley of orders, the brigadier commanded a minute search of every stable and picket line, beginning with brigade headquarters.

The search progressed no further than its starting point. There, crowded into a stall with the brigadier's own mount, was discovered the French general's charger.

What might have come of this contretemps was never known, for the rise of international complications and the brigadier's high blood pressure were prevented by the arrival of horse replacements with orders for the division to entrain immediately for the front. There was no time now for investigations and inspections. With well-disciplined expedition, unit after unit was loaded on to the trains provided.

At the foot of a ramp leading into a boxcar, Corporal Thomas was gently urging Barbara to enter. The little mare, still nervous, hesitated. Jim caught the eye of the stable sergeant watching him and answered his grin. Somehow he hadn't been able to go on hating the Irishman. They had gotten together after their sleight-of-hand with the French general's charger.

"Get going there," Sergeant Quinn called over. "There's a war on."

"Give me a second or two, Sarge," Thomas begged. "I'll make her understand."

"Ain't that mare got eyes?" Quinn demanded. "Look there, right on the side of the car it says: '*Chevaux* 8—*Hommes* 40.' That means eight horses or forty men."

"Seems like the mare can't read French," Thomas grinned. "I reckon she's not a French horse after all."

"I ain't so sure." The stable sergeant approached and barked at Barbara. "Hey, *vous. Allez* up there. *Toot sweet!*"

Barbara stood stock still. Thomas patted her neck and said softly:

"Let's go. All aboard."

Barbara docilely walked up the ramp into the car.

"That there," Stable Sergeant Quinn announced with decision, "is an American hoss. Corporal, don't let nobody tell you different."

CHAPTER VI

HOOF-PRINTS IN THE MUD

AND the rain fell. Heavy, drenching downpours had scarcely ceased since the regiment detrained far from its destination. Marching by night to escape observation by German planes, by day the batteries lay concealed in dripping woods. Leafy boughs, a screen against eyes in the air, supplied little shelter from the torrents. Knee-deep in mud, the artillerymen struggled through the details of making camp. Even the solace of a more-or-less hot meal from the rolling kitchens was soon forgotten by bedraggled soldiers who wrapped themselves in blankets and ponchos and, under gun carriage or pup tent, tried to sleep on the clammy, oozing ground. Tied to wheels, the horses stood miserably, pulling one leg after another out of the sucking mud. Before many more days in such watery footing, the soft cartilage of their inner hoofs would begin to rot, and the horses seemed to know it.

Still it rained. One more night, inky as that one before Soissons, brought the batteries near the positions they were to occupy. They turned off the road into a field. Down sank the carriages, almost to their hubcaps in clinging mire. Snorting and panting, the teams heaved against their breast straps, legs driving like piston rods. Here and there a driver's whip whacked an off horse not pulling his share. Cannoneers strained at the wheel spokes. The non-coms rode beside their sections, urging on drivers and mounts, bringing every pair into draft. Jim Thomas leaned from his saddle to smack the broad rump of a wheel horse, while Barbara forged along beneath him. Two days ago, when the going first became heavy, she had tried to pick her way through the mud like a lady caught in a storm in her best slippers and stockings. Now she spattered through regardless and when she slipped into a deep mud hole fairly bucked herself out of it.

There are men with a way with horses, and Thomas was one of them. When the heavy *fourgon* wagon sank deep in some muddy morass and stuck as if embedded in concrete, they sent for the Texan. He spoke to and quieted the exhausted team, standing with rolling eyes, quivering flanks, and shaking limbs. Taking the reins from the driver, he ordered him and every other away from the vicinity. Then he gathered the reins and called to the team. Out of their last reserve of strength, the horses gave him that supreme effort which swearing or whipping could not draw from them. They wrenched the wagon out of the mudhole, dragged it onward.

At the artillery position, mud-plastered men were piling shells, 2,500 to a battery, by their guns. Shrouded by night, muffled by rain, activity hummed around the fringe of the German lines thrust out to form the St. Mihiel salient. The greatest American army ever assembled for an attack, 400,000 men, was preparing to join battle. Grant's Army of the Potomac had numbered only 125,000 at its maximum.

Corporal Thomas, returning to the combat train on the road, looked at the luminous dial of his wrist watch. It was close to one o'clock, when all the guns in the sector would open up. He groped

through the dark to where he had left Barbara. Usually dependable in standing, she had strayed and he could not find her. Worried, for she might break and run when the artillery shattered the silence, he risked a shrill whistle he had been teaching her to answer. A sergeant swore at him for it, but almost at once he heard the splash of hoofs in the mud, and the mare's soft muzzle was in his hands.

It was none too soon. On the dot of one, like the crack of doom, the guns crashed in unison, swelling into a vast diapason of sound. To the infantry looking back, all the dark woods seemed suddenly ablaze. From the German lines S.O.S. rockets soared, but their batteries, smothered in high explosive, could give little succor. Hour after hour the American bombardment continued, and at five the light artillery laid down a barrage which, followed closely by the half-drowned infantry, rolled forward, every burst a geyser of mud and steel, for three hours more. American planes, masters of air this time, swooped down to machine-gun the retreating foe.

The German first line was taken, then the second and third. Towns and machine-gun nests were outflanked and mopped up. Here and there the enemy stood and struck back, but not for long. He seldom paused in his rapid withdrawal from the salient.

Close after the pursuing American infantry rolled the guns. Hitherto the men at the firing batteries had not often seen their targets; they had fired by data, measured on maps, and corrections telephoned back by forward observing officers. Now, with open sights, they poured shells into garrisoned houses and saw them erupt streams of fleeing figures in field gray. For several days the batteries struggled through quagmires of yellow slime, unlimbering, firing, limbering up and pushing on again. In spite of attacks by German bombers, casualties were light. Still the tremendous effort required of the horses told on them heavily. They were exhausted and weak for want of sufficient food, for forage supplies had not been able to keep up. Toward the last of the action, even the small bags of oats which wise section chiefs had tucked away in caisson pockets and fourgon boxes were gone, and there was nothing to feed but a little hay when an outfit was lucky enough to find a dump along the road. The animals were equine scarecrows when orders for relief came at last and the division counter-marched to the rear.

THE adjutant was still wanting to talk about it when the regiment at last reached a rest area with barracks for the men and fine stables for the horses. He had his chance at mess that night.

"This corporal in 'D' Battery I ran into—he'd been buying oats for his horse out of his own pay, believe it or not," the adjutant held forth. "Must have been doing it every chance he got since we pulled out of the salient. His mount looked sleek and well-fed. Best-looking nag in any outfit. Seemed as if I'd seen her before. Neat little chestnut mare."

"Probably the mare young Brent used to ride back in the States," said Colonel Mack. "I'd heard she had rejoined. Just how I don't know—officially."

"Quite a jumper, isn't she?" one of the majors interjected. "She's got a reputation through the whole regiment."

"If she gets through the war," the colonel remarked, "she may become a regimental tradition. Like Putnam, in Reilly's Battery."

Persuaded by the young officers, the old campaigner told the story of the horse he had known as second lieutenant during the Boxer Rebellion in China. How, when the American contingent with the Allies was marching to the relief of the desperately besieged Legations in Pekin, one of Reilly's gun sections started to climb a steep bank to take position to fire. Almost to the top, trace springs had snapped under the strain, and only Putnam, the near wheel horse, remained in draft. That veteran, sturdy shoulders hard against his collar, mighty haunch muscles flexed and standing out, alone held the gun and limber on the slope, saving them from a crash, then hauled them up on the high ground. He served through the campaign and seven years later was retired and pensioned in a pasture. When the old hero died, he

was given a regular military funeral—flag-draped caisson, firing squad, and all—probably the only war horse ever so honored.

The lieutenant-colonel told of Jumbo, of the First Field Artillery, a veritable top sergeant of a horse. He used to keep every recruit horse in his battery in order; if he caught one balking, he would sink his teeth in its neck and shake till the loafer worked. Every nag in the corral always granted Jumbo precedence when the stable doors were opened, and no soldier dared feed another horse sugar in his presence. So heavy were his neck muscles, a special collar had to be made for him.

A hater of rattlesnakes, he stamped every one he saw to death and attempted to do for Oklahoma what St. Patrick did for Ireland.

The senior major remembered Foxhall of the Third Field. A great bucker, never ridden bareback, Foxhall was a fine worker in harness. He was also considerable of a joker. In the Spanish War, when the horses were lowered over the side of the transport to swim a short distance to the Cuban shore, Foxhall elected to swim five miles out to sea, hotly pursued by a boatload of indignant sailors. Grown old, he was assigned to the battery bread cart, which he hauled undriven every morning to the bakery, where he received a loaf as his pay. He lived to the age of forty.

But the most famous horse of the Third was Rodney, the other major reminded the mess. Rodney and his teammate Shaw pulled not only their own but other guns out of the Cuban mud and brought them into action. Rodney, like Jumbo, hazed rookie horses till they made friends, after which he treated them with dignified consideration. Left at Fort Myer in his old age when his battery went on a hike, he was condemned and ordered sold by an inspector who did not know his history. Rodney's soldier friends returned to find him up at auction. When they tried to buy him, a mean-spirited dealer bid up the price, but the battery, digging down into its pockets, recaptured him for $120. Petted, groomed, fed all he could safely eat, a favorite with all, the grand old horse lived till he was 30.

As the last speaker finished, a quiet voice addressed the regimental commander.

"*Mon Colonel,* may I venture to add something?"

It was the French *liaison* officer attached to the regiment. His jet black hair was grayed at the temples, his features finely chiseled and mobile. Medal ribbons gleamed on the breast of his horizon-blue tunic, its sleeves bearing the *galons* of a captain and wound and service chevrons.

"Certainly, De Condenbove," Colonel Mack answered. "We Americans have been monopolizing this. You of the French artillery surely have heroic tales of your horses. Tell us some."

"This, sir, is not a story," the Frenchman went on in his perfect English. "It is something I have myself written. Forgive me if I presume."

The mess listened attentively, as the officer, liked and respected throughout the regiment, drew a paper from his pocket and read:

"The Artillery Horse's Prayer

"To thee, my master, I offer my prayer.

"Treat me as a living being, not as a machine.

"Feed me, water and care for me, and when the day's work is done, groom me carefully, so that my circulation may act well, for remember: a good grooming is equivalent to half a feed. Clean my feet and legs and keep them in good condition, for they are the most important parts of my body.

"Pet me sometimes. Be always gentle to me so that I may serve you the more gladly and learn to love you.

"Do not jerk the reins; do not whip me when I am going up-hill. Do not force me out of the regular gait or you will not have my strength when you want it. Never strike, beat or kick me when I do not understand what you mean, but give me a chance to understand you. Watch me, and if I fail to do your bidding, see if something is not wrong with my harness or feet.

"Don't draw the straps too tight: give me freedom to move my head. Don't make my load too heavy, and oh! I pray

thee, have me well shod every month.

"Examine my teeth when I do not eat; I may have some teeth too long or I may have an ulcerated tooth and that, you know, is very painful. Do not tie my head in an unnatural position or take away my best defence against flies and mosquitoes by cutting off my tail.

"I cannot, alas, tell you when I am thirsty, so give me pure cold water frequently. Do all you can to protect me from the sun, and throw a cover over me—not when I am working, but when I am standing in the cold.

"I always try to do cheerfully the work you require of me, and day and night I stand for hours patiently waiting for you.

"In this war, like any other soldier, I will do my best without hope of any war-cross, content to serve my country and you, and, if need be, I will die calm and dignified on the battlefield; therefore, oh! my master, treat me in the kindest way and your God will reward you.

"I am not irreverent if I ask this, my prayer, in the name of Him who was born in a stable."

Colonel Mack stirred in his chair and broke the succeeding silence.

"Amen to that, Captain," he said, "and our sincere thanks for a beautiful and a touching tribute—" the mess warmly seconded him.

A far-away look in his eyes, the colonel said:

"We get fond of our horses, of those friends of ours. Too fond, I sometimes think, for the peace of our hearts. We've got to see them hit by shell fragments, maybe put them out of their agony with a bullet through their heads. We've got to work them nearly to death. When their service is over, it's only a few of them we can pension and let live out their days in green pastures. But we can take decent care of them while they're with us. And we can honor them."

The old artilleryman lifted his glass. Then he gave his toast.

"Gentlemen, to those that keep the caissons rolling along—our horses!"

They drank it standing.

CHAPTER VII

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

Lightly answered the Colonel's son: "I
hold by the blood of my clan:
Take up the mare for my father's gift—
by God, she has carried a man!"
The red mare ran to the Colonel's son,
and nuzzled against his breast;
"We be two strong men," said Kamal
then, "but she loveth the younger
best."

—Rudyard Kipling.

JUST before the colonel proposed his toast, a young officer, haggard and pale, had entered the mess unnoticed. Hastily he filled a wine glass and drank the toast with fervor.

When the glasses were lowered, the others saw him.

"Brent!" boomed the colonel amid a chorus of welcome. "Glad to have you back! Are you all right now? You look pretty dragged out still."

"All right, sir, thank you," the newcomer answered in a voice still hoarse from gas. "I had to hurry back as soon as they'd let me loose from the hospital.

I was afraid they might shift me to another regiment."

They drank his health and gave him the news of the regiment, especially of the recovery of Barbara. Brent had not known that Thomas had recaptured the mare. Now, answering his eager questions, they told him of the mare's adventures. She was in fine shape, they assured him, and could not have had better care than that caisson corporal in his battery had given her. They related the exploits of Thomas and the mare in the mud of St. Mihiel. Then they packed the convalescent off to his billet.

Brent did not turn in at once. For a long time he sat on the edge of his bed in deep thought.

His head was splitting when at last he got to his feet. This affair had best be settled here and now. Brent sent his striker off with orders for Corporal Thomas to report at once.

The soldier who stepped through the doorway into Brent's billet was outwardly impassive and military. He said: "Sir, Corporal Thomas reports as ordered."

"Sit down, Corporal," the hollow-cheeked officer invited.

Thomas, ignoring the invitation, remained standing.

"I want to thank you for what you've done for Barbara," Brent said warmly. He did not seem to notice that Thomas's lips curled. "Never thought we'd see her again," he went on. He stared into space, remembering. "When you spotted her passing us in that charge and then I heard the Boche machine-guns open up, I was sure she was gone for good. She must have had some other tough times, too, since we lost her in the States."

"She did," Thomas declared grimly. "You ought to have seen her mouth and flanks." He fell abruptly silent.

"I told you once Barbara was an officer's mount," Brent resumed quietly. "She is. No officer could ask a finer."

Jim Thomas continued looking at him. His face told nothing, his eyes had noth-

Lieutenant Brent said with a smile, "Corporal, I won't rank you out of her. Nor will any other man, if I can help it."

Jim Thomas saluted and started to leave. At the doorway he turned, stepped back.

"Sir," he asked, "will the Lieutenant shake?"

He had his answer quickly.

"You're damned right he will, Corporal. Put her there."

"Then I was given a draft horse,
Schooled in the West Riding Hall;
Splendid four-gaiter they called him—
A walk, trot, stumble, and fall". . . .

THE regiment had orders for the front again.

Rest had been all too brief. The division paid the penalty for the fame it had won as shock troops or reckless gallantry. As part of a French corps, it was to assault Blanc Mont, German stronghold since 1914, key to all the battle line in the Champagne between Rheims and the Argonne.

By train, then by road, the division moved forward, on through the desolation of a sector which had been won and lost and won again in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. Past smashed trenches scarring the chalk-white soil, rusty mazes of barb wire, countless shell craters, heaps of stone once homes. No tree relieved the utter devastation. Here were strewn huddled heaps of horizon blue and field gray, still unburied Frenchmen and Germans, rotting in the sun. They were many. Not even hardened veterans could pass them and the bloated bodies of horses and the shattered cannon without uncomfortable premonition. Ahead surely lay another field of Armageddon like unto this one they were crossing. They threw off the foreboding with the soldier's fatalism. If a bullet or a shell came along with your number on it, that was that. Meanwhile what use was worrying?

Again the batteries marched under the cloak of night down a broad road to the front. The well-trained teams, scarcely needing guidance, kept to the right, with the proper interval between carriages. Once the leading section of the combat train of "D" Battery walked out to close up. After some time Stable Sergeant Quinn, riding at its head, peered through the gloom intently. There was something peculiar about the gait of the animal drawing the vehicle ahead. Not only that; its ears were too long and they

flopped. It was no horse but a mule. The artillery caissons were about to follow a machine-gun section into the front line. Quinn's timely discovery turned them back, and they found the side road on which they should have turned off and rejoined the battery.

The artillery opened with an intense bombardment and laid down a rolling barrage. Preceded by the bursting shells and most welcome tanks, the infantry attacked. A hot fire from the German lines girding the stronghold poured into them. Stubbornly they drove through, overrunning the enemy trenches, never faltering in spite of staggering losses. The field guns, reaching the limit of their range, limbered up and followed.

Only the aviators can survey a great modern battle as generals used to from a nearby hilltop, and the aviators, usually forced to fly high, are limited to a distant prospect. As for the troops on the ground, each soldier sees only his own little segment of the combat. For Lieutenant John Brent, the storming of Blanc Mont and its formidable defenses was a drama of blood and thunder played on the small stage of his own immediate surroundings, and much of it was enacted behind a succession of curtains, the crests over which his battery fired. Commanding his four guns, he seemed to himself like an orchestra leader. Again and again his right arm swept up and down, and the 75's cracked and flamed, their barrels gliding back in recoil, then returning into battery. Breeches clicked open, and shell cases clanged musically on the trails. New projectiles were snapped in, gunners bent over their sights. Lanyards jerked, and four more shells screeched on their way over the crest toward the invisible target. Teams trotted up to drag the cannon forward.

The next crest loomed in front like another lowered curtain.

At intervals, Brent and his men at the guns no longer were a tiny, isolated group in this mighty theater of life and death but suddenly stepped upon the stage themselves. Once, a rolling kitchen managed to reach them, and fifty hungry men were clustering about it for slum and coffee. Then a German shell struck in the center of the position, only a few yards away. Tied to a wheel of the kitchen stood a horse, between the explosion and the men. Because the animal took the full force of the blast, the men lived. There came a moment when a plane with ominous black crosses on its wings swooped down out of the sky and dived at the battery, it machine-guns blazing. The artillerymen knew sheer terror, a dreadful defenselessness, their ears ringing with the roar of motors and the vicious singing of bullets. An instant and the plane was gone. Most but not all of the figures clinging to the earth arose. The guns squads staggered back to their places. Again Brent's arm rose and fell, and the symphony of volleys crashed. The battery was still in action.

Brent felt the wild rhythm, the fierce joy of combat, as hour on hour the grimy cannoneers served the smoke-wreathed guns. A stirring phrase ran through his head:

"And their batteries, black with battle". . . .

Something by that English poet Chesterton, wasn't it? How did it go?

"The touch and the tornado; all our guns give tongue together,
St. Barbara for the gunnery and God defend the right,
They are stopped and gapped and battered as we blast away". . . .

The diminishing piles of shells beside the guns called back Brent's thoughts. More ammunition! Where was the combat train? There it came up the road which German shellfire was beginning to sweep. They almost had made it when a black geyser erupted to the left of the trotting column. Above the reverberation soared the shrill, agonized scream of a horse, mortally wounded. A shell fragment had hit the near-lead of the first section. The driver, unhurt, struggled clear, shot the kicking animal and stripped off the harness.

Brent saw Corporal Thomas trot up, unsaddle Barbara and harness her in the dead horse's place. That was the duty of a caisson corporal in such an event, and the single mounts of the

regiment had been trained to work in harness for just such an emergency. But, Brent realized, it must have come hard. He heard the driver, a Milwaukee lad of German parentage, call to Thomas as he mounted up:

"Tough, Jim. But I'll take good care of her."

The caissons rolled up; their precious ammunition was unloaded and they disappeared down the road for more.

GERMAN batteries had the range of the road to the metre and they knew it must now be in use for vital ammunition supply. They made a giant's bowling alley of it, an alley thunderous with a rolling barrage of high explosive. Still the combat train came dashing through, drivers bent low over the necks of the racing teams, caissons clattering and bouncing, as the column veered out into a field to avoid a particularly deadly stretch of the road, then back on it again. Twice, more, miraculously, they made that perilous trip without disaster.

But the 75's were insatiable. They ate up ammunition at six rounds a minute per gun. The fire so desperately needed by the attacking infantry must not cease. Soon an anxious frown creased Lieutenant Brent's brow again. He shouted over his shoulder:

"Any sign of that combat train yet, Thomas?"

"Not yet, sir," Corporal answered. "Wait—yes, there they are!"

The van of the train was emerging from behind a clump of trees screening a turn of the road, ready for a dash to the guns. Thomas recognized Barbara, still in the lead pair of the first section.

The German guns were mixing shrapnel with the high explosive now, white smoke clouds mingling with the gray-black bursts. The shrapnel balls rattled on the hard surface of the road like hailstones.

At the firing battery, Brent and Thomas, safe behind the crest in so-called dead space, watched the advancing train with mounting apprehension.

The first section was out from behind the trees when a high shrapnel burst caught it. A sergeant and his mount went down as if struck by a lightning bolt. The boy from Milwaukee on Barbara's back threw up his arms, swayed and fell. Behind him the saddles of the swing and wheel pairs were suddenly empty, too. The horses of the leading team were still on their feet, but, driverless, they recoiled in a rearing, tangled mass on their limber.

Groaning in anguish, Brent turned to the man who had been standing at his side. Thomas was no longer there. At top speed, he was running down the shell-swept road.

Futile bravery, thought Brent. Thomas could not reach that milling team in time. There was a far better chance for men from the rear of the train, if they were unhit, to rush up and halt the threatened runaway.

But Thomas had stopped part way down the road. His shrill whistle cut through the bass detonations of the shells. Out of the confusion in front of the limber a chestnut hide emerged. Ears on a well-shapped Arab head pricked up. . . .

THERE is a tale told of the manner in which the Prophet Mohammed established his celebrated stud of the Arab blood. How he took forty mares, trained in the art of warfare, and shut them in a stable without food or water for two days. Only when the hoofs of the ravenous animals almost had battered down the walls were the doors opened. Out dashed the herd in a furious gallop toward the river. When they nearly had reached the water, Mohammed caused war trumpets to be sounded from the opposite direction. Thirty-five of the mares plunged on to drink, but five, in spite of their terrible thirst, turned back and obeyed the rallying call of the trumpets. It was from those five that the Prophet bred the steeds that carried the Sword of Islam on its path of conquest.

So, likewise, Barbara heard and obeyed. She struggled forward, dragging the rest of the team into line. Down the road into the inferno of hurtling steel rolled the driverless section. Thomas, running back to the firing bat-

tery, heard a faint cheer and knew that the rest of the train was following. On it came at a dead gallop through a rain of shells which seemed to burst at the very feet of the foaming teams. Caissons, skirting craters, tilted crazily, righted themselves. Barbara and her teammates swerved at the blast of each concussion but galloped on.

Now the men at the battery could see the whites of the rolling eyes of the onrushing horses. The road lead through the guns and over the crest. Would the frantic team check its headlong pace or charge straight through? Cannoneers left their posts to form a barrier line to hold to the last moment. They flung up their hands, waved their helmets and yelled.

It worked—that and long training. Hundreds of times the teams of the combat train had galloped up the guns, wheeled about in their rear and halted. Now, though driverless, they followed the familiar routine, executing the evolution neatly with the rest of the train behind them, and standing with trembling legs and heaving flanks. Men hurried to their heads, while other hands unlatched caisson doors and pulled out the ammunition. Jim Thomas, his arm around Barbara's neck, rubbed her ears and whispered into them.

The tide of battle rose, lifted to a tumultuous crescendo for the bloody capture of the ridge, ebbed slowly. Contesting each foot of ground, savagely counter-attacking, the enemy withdrew. Beyond the Aisne River he would halt and hold. But not for long. The stage was set now for the grim finale of the Argonne Forest and the climax which men hopefully called a lasting peace.

During the latter part of the battle of Blanc Mont, the division's infantry, its ranks thinned by heavy casualties, was relieved. Its artillery, however, remained in line in support of the fresh division, whose artillery was not yet trained. Gradually drumfire sank to sporadic bombardments. Days seemed comparatively peaceful, and worn men could snatch sleep at night in spite of crimson flares and explosions marking the destruction of towns by the retreating Germans. Only when the victors pressed the pursuit too closely, did the vanquished sullenly retaliate.

Jim Thomas, cited and promoted to a sergeantcy, had found another horse to replace Barbara in the team. At dusk on the last day of the battle he was riding her through a field with a message for headquarters. Four miles away a battery of Austrian 88's, about to limber up and continue its retreat, fired a last salvo. The shells from those guns of high muzzle velocity, giving no shrieking warning of their approach, flashed and cracked viciously in the field like whiplashes amplified a thousandfold.

The chestnut mare jumped convulsively and shuddered. The man on her back reeled and slumped in his saddle. His body slid to the ground and lay still.

CHAPTER VIII

FORTUNES OF WAR

DUSK deepened into night, and the stars came out. Guns still grumbled in the distance. Along the road at the edge of the field, reinforcements and supply trucks streamed toward the front.

That French field, dotted with the bodies of men and horses, bore a certain resemblance to another battleground in American history. On the prairie grass of the Little Bighorn forty years before, lay Custer, his officers, and his troopers, killed by the Sioux. And then, as now, alone among the still forms, stood a badly-wounded horse, legs braced, head drooping.

Like Comanche, the mount of slain Captain Myles Keogh, and the only survivor of Custer's force except the Indian scout Curly, Barbara would not desert her master. Never stirring from his side, at intervals she nosed the still figure of Sergeant Thomas, then lifted her head to gaze piteously around her. On the road, the shadowy column never ceased its forward flow, slowing only as it gave way to the right to make room for laden ambulances and empty trucks, bound for the rear.

An hour passed. Over on the road, the motor of an ambulance sputtered and died. A swearing driver and his

helper got assistance to shove the vehicle out of the traffic into the field. The driver lifted the hood and began fumbling in the darkness. His helper, leaning against a wheel, encouraged the driver to further sulphurous mutterings.

"Wish you had a flashlight, huh?" the helper said. "Sure, that'd be grand. We could send a wireless message to a Boche bomber, but a light would be cheaper and just as good. 'Bout time you knew the touch system of motor repair."

The driver damned him with magnificent fluency. Grinning, the helper egged him on:

"We got some wounded in this bus might like to get back to the hospital some time tonight. Me, now, I'm in no hurry. I like to watch you work."

The driver branded him as the supreme mistake of a long and degenerate line and ordered him to turn on the ignition and crank up. When the other obliged, the engine showed a few signs of life, then expired again.

"Keep on trying," the helper blithely remarked, "Say, something moved over in the field!"

"Yeh?" the driver snapped. We cleared out that field yesterday. There's nothing left there but stiffs.'

"Just the same, I'm going to look," said the helper.

"My hero!" the driver snorted from under the hood.

The investigator was back from the field soon.

"There's a horse standing over a guy pretty bad hit but still alive. We got room on the floor of this chariot. Come on. Freeze on to the other end of this stretcher."

They bandaged unconscious Jim Thomas and slid him into the ambulance. The driver returned to his motor and succeeded in starting it. The ambulance men climbed to the seat and watched their chance to swing into the traffic. Beside them in the field a dark shape loomed.

"Hey!" said the helper. "It's the horse. Followed us over and wants to come along. Nag's wounded, too. Maybe we better shoot it."

"Government property," the driver reminded him. "You'd find that horse on the payroll."

"Might at that," the helper agreed. "You're right for once. Well, drive on, James, and don't spare the horses."

The ambulance lurched forward. Barbara stiffly moved along at its side in a limping, halting trot.

"Hey!" growled the driver. "That goat's still with us. Lean out and shoo it away."

The other swung out on the running board.

"Beat it," he called.

Barbara eyed him but kept on. She knew who was in that ambulance and she was going to stay close to him. The helper waved an arm and yelled:

"Go home, you. Go on home!"

Barbara shied away but trotted back by the car.

"Home!" the driver sniffed sarcastically. "Whaddyemean, home? That hoss ain't got no more chance of going home than you or me has."

Traffic had been moving faster, and there was an empty stretch ahead. The driver stepped on the accelerator.

Barbara trotted more rapidly, tried desperately to break into a gallop. She could not manage it, for the wound in her shoulder, stiffening, galled every step. As she saw the car receding in the darkness, she whinnied forlornly.

The helper craned out to look back.

"That hoss still coming?" asked the driver.

"Guess not. Can't see it anymore."

They drove on for five minutes without speaking.

"Gosh!" said the helper softly. "I thought this war had made me hard-boiled."

"Hell's bells!" the ambulance driver snorted. "It's only a hoss, ain't it? It's going to kick in soon, too. You seen thousands of 'em fertilizing France. To say nothing of men."

"I know, but"—

"Aw, forgit it," finished the driver.

FORGOTTEN, unregarded by the streams of traffic rolling by, Barbara stood listlessly by the roadside, waiting with the long patience of dumb animals, weak and

weary unto death. In the early days of the war when the Germans drove fiercely at Paris, horses in her condition would have been shot or left to die. Later they fared little better, until the supply began to dwindle dangerously. In the summer of 1918, the average life of an artillery horse at the front was only ten days. The imperative necessity of conserving resources forced action which humanitarian motives, submerged in war, could not achieve. The war was taking that ghastly toll of draft animals which finally would reach the stupendous total of eight million.

Because it had been realized that the war horse was a means to victory, because without him the guns would stand stalled and impotent, rescue came to the wounded chestnut mare that night.

Through the backwash of the battle moved mobile veterinary sections, collecting incapacitated animals. One of them found Barbara in the gray of the dawn.

The gray-haired lieutenant in command began to examine her.

"Hello," he exclaimed. "It's that little mare out of 'D' Battery. She's got a shell splinter in this shoulder. Hand me that iodine swab . . . now that instrument . . . hold her tight."

Barbara winced and trembled as he probed.

"Can't get it. Too deep," said the vet. "Gauze now and I'll plug up this hole. . . . She's lost a lot of blood, but maybe she'll be all right. Walk her around a bit."

A soldier led Barbara up and down. She walked very lamely, but she did not totter.

"Guess she can make the railhead," the vet decided. "Ticket her."

Feeble and stiff, the little mare was detrained directly on to a truck and carried to the hospital. Led into a room with white walls, she was compelled to lie down on a covered mat. A man in a white gown persisted in keeping a cone over her muzzle until, breathing of a strange, sweetish smell, she lapsed into unconsciousness.

The mare woke, sick and dazed. Her nostrils quivered, and a stable smell gave her slight reassurance. Then, as she moved her legs, she was gripped with panic. She could find no footing. She was floating in the air. She braced her shoulders—how the right one pained!—and gathered her haunches to land. But she never felt the expected shock. To her consternation she could not alight from this jump.

Around her belly was one of those broad webbing slings, such as had been used when she was embarked in and debarked from the transport. She discovered that her hind legs could touch the floor.

Watered, fed and groomed, Barbara grew accustomed to this peculiar state of affairs. She dreaded the visits of a white-clad man who came to dress her wound. But the wound healed. It left a right-angle scar, apex up, resembling the chevron a wounded soldier was entitled to wear on the right sleeve of his uniform. The day came when she was led slowly around a covered exercise track, walked a little longer each time. But she continued to limp badly. The orderly wondered whether this animal was lamed for life.

The next day heavy animal casualties from the Argonne were shipped in, and the place was packed and jammed. Harried men called in remount inspectors. Horses were led out and hastily examined.

Some were returned to their stalls, others motioned to be added to a column, bound for the village.

One of the latter was Barbara.

THE hospital was still busy and crowded on a certain day early in November, when a racket—wild shouting, blowing of bugles, and shooting—started in the village. Swiftly it spread, and soon every member of the veterinary corps on duty at the hospital was joining in a tumultuous celebration. Apprehensive, the horses in the corrals stood with pricked-up ears. Could they have understood that this was Armistice Day, surcease from the agony of four long years of war, the horses would have rejoiced, too.

"Fini la guerre!" the village screamed and shouted again and again. Down at the station, a train puffed in, whistling

in jubilation. A sergeant of American artillery, pale and thin, his left sleeve hanging empty, stepped out of a compartment into the midst of the uproar.

He fingered the travel orders in his tunic pocket, orders directing him to pick up a certain chestnut mare at the hospital and rejoin his regiment. Next to the orders was the letter which had reached him in the hospital from the regimental veterinary. He smiled to himself. That old vet had ticketed the mare as an officer's personal mount to make sure she would come back to the regiment!

It was no easy task to pin down the hospital commandant, a jovial, red-faced major of the veterinary corps.

"Travel orders for a horse—now!" he protested. "Let it wait till tomorrow, Sergeant. Man, the war's over! I'm planning a party for my staff and can't be bothered. Join up with our non-coms., why don't you, for their celebration? They'd be glad to have you. Enough of this now. See you later."

But Jim Thomas was not to be put off, and in the end the major, out of respect for the other's empty sleeve and medal, heard him out.

"Want to see that mare again, do you, soldier?" he smiled. "I know how you feel. Wouldn't be a vet if I didn't. I'll take you through the hospital. Don't know the mare myself. Only took command here a while ago. You say she's an officer's mount?"

Vainly they went through the whole hospital. Jim Thomas, growing desperate, faced the commandant.

"She's gone! You've lost her!" he accused angrily. "Look here, Major! What kind of an outfit is this? You can't get away with that with an officer's mount!"

"Damn it, I know it!" the other growled. "She would have had a ticket and papers here, of course, but they've been destroyed. We had an air raid here and a fire that burned up a lot of headquarters papers. When I took over here, we had to call in inspectors and—my God! maybe that's what happened to her."

"What?" Thomas demanded.

"We had to make room," the veterinary explained. "Every horse no good for Army service was condemned and sold."

"Condemned and sold!" Jim Thomas echoed him. His face went white and then red, with wrath. "You did that to the little mare after what she's done!

"Easy, Sergeant," the officer cautioned. "How would we know? I'll get wires busy and see what I can do. But I doubt if we've any record of where the mare went. They just auctioned off the condemned animals, fast as they could sell 'em, down in the village there. Try—"

The sergeant waited to hear no more. Through the window, the major saw him hurrying toward the village.

THEY still talk sometimes in that little French town of the strange *soldat Americain* who roamed around on Armistice Night asking what had become of a horse. On Armistice Night!

It was the village blacksmith who gave Jim Thomas a scrap of news at last.

But yes, the blacksmith declared. He had been at the auction of condemned animals, sold by the Americans. And he did remember a little chestnut mare. She'd caught his eye. A neat piece of horseflesh but with a bad limp.

Who had bought her? The smith shrugged eloquently. How can one remember such matters when one is celebrating? Eh, *bien*, he would try to think. Was it not that farmer, a veteran disabled and discharged? The man had asked if that limp might be cured. Where dwelt the man? Around Verdun somewhere, the smith thought. He would be going back to farm there again.

The blacksmith waved aside Jim Thomas's thanks. It was nothing. He raised his bottle dreaming. *"A la victoire, monvieux! Aux Etats-Unis! A France!"*

CHAPTER IX

THE LONG, LONG TRAIL

BARBARA'S new owner took her north to the town where his family lived as refugees. They moved slowly, for the halt led the lame Jean Drouet had taken

a German bayonet thrust in the thigh and would gratefully have ridden his purchase. But he knew better than to risk it. This mare, for all her small size, was a bargain if she recovered from her limp.

There would be much work in her, and there would be much required on his farm, once the Boche was driven back from Verdun.

During halts, the discharged poilu rubbed Barbara's wounded forequarter and leg with liniment. He saw with satisfaction that the chestnut mare grew slightly more limber.

His wife came out to greet him, beaming. Here was her man who, just before his horse-buying trip, had come back to her alive from the war and need not return to it because of his wound.

"See what I have bought from the Americans," he displayed. "She is little, yes. Not like our good Roland, stolen by the Boche. She is lame. But she was cheap—and she will do to work the farm when the time comes."

And that became the destiny of Barbara, as of many another war horse, when the field-gray tide covering northern France ebbed at last. She was hitched to a cart—Drouet discovering with delight that she was broken to harness—but the family's meagre household goods, saved when they were evacuated, did not load it heavily. No one rode. Drouet's small daughter Renée proudly led the still-limping little mare. Again the roads were filled with processions of refugees who four years before had traversed them in despairing flight.

Now retracing their steps, bound homeward, they were happy, though many of them were returning to houses in ruins and fields scarred with trenches and sown with steel.

Verdun! From his fields Drouet could see in the distance the citadel which the enemy vainly had stormed. They had not passed! Yet they had left their mark. There was indeed much work to be done on the farm before spring planting. If Drouet had known that Arab blood flowed in Barbara's veins, that she was a splendid jumper, it would have mattered not a whit to him. What if she was a veteran, wounded in action? So was he.

That was all over now. Both of them must toil to the full limit of their endurance.

ABOUT the time the Drouets took the road for home, Barbara's regiment pulled its guns out of their last emplacements in the Argonne and began a march on the Rhine.

Through delivered and rejoicing Belgium, through indifferent Luxembourg they marched. On into Germany they pressed, hard on the heels of the demoralized armies of the vanquished. On rolled the caissons over roads littered with abandoned rifles and helmets and the gaunt, starved bodies of dead horses. On through villages where some watched them sullenly and others greeted them curiously, for censorship had kept not a few Germans ignorant of the fact that the United States had entered the war. At last the regiment halted its long hike and was billeted in a Rhine town near the headquarters of the American zone of occupation at Coblenz. The men in olive drab shared their rations with the thin, flaxen-haired children. An atmosphere, hostile at first, changed to friendliness. The war was over.

Alert nevertheless, the invaders stood ready for action till the Germans signed the fateful treaty. Still Barbara's regiment and other regular troops kept the watch on the Rhine, while National Army divisions sailed back across the Atlantic.

Homesick but resigned to their duty, the regulars stayed on.

At the first opportunity, Captain John Brent, now a battery commander, reported to the colonel that Seargeant Thomas had not returned, as expected, with the mare.

The colonel turned to his adjutant. "Get after that right away," he ordered. "The war's over. It's time we were able to find out something in this man's army. Pull any wires you have to but get action."

It still was far from easy to trace one non-commissioned officer and one horse in the vast A.E.F., now in the turmoil of

embarking for home. The adjutant was a dogged, persevering fellow. He looked on the tape when it was red and, figuratively drawing sabre, slashed it right and left.

The first news came from the base hospital where Sergeant Thomas had been a patient. Rapidly it spread through the regiment from soldier to soldier:

"Jim Thomas got out of the hospital. . . . Pretty bad cracked up, they say. . . . They slated him for the first boat home and discharge. . . . Can you believe it? he puts up a kick at that. . . . He flashes orders on 'em to go and get an officer's hoss—that's Barbara—and bring her back to the outfit. . . . Seems the surgeon there came from Texas, too, and humors him. . . . They give him leave and let him loose."

A report from the veterinary hospital furnished the next bulletin, circulated among all ranks:

"Say, hear what they pulled at the vet hospital where Barbara was? They condemned and sold her!. . . . Sure, they're doing all kinds of buck-passing on it. . . . An accident, they say."

This was the next communique that filtered through:

"Here's the latest. . . . Jim Thomas shows up at that vet hospital. He finds out what they done to Barbara. . . . Can yuh hear him telling 'em off! Some Frog bought Barbara, but they don't know where in hell she's gone. . . . Jim pulls out—They don't know where in hell he is, either."

It was a long time before any further trace of the missing was reported. Then came this:

"Say! Jim Thomas was picked up on a road, damn near dead of pneumonia. Got him to a hospital in time to pull him through. . . . After that they shot him down to Nice. . . . Jim's minus his left wing, but the Old Man's fixed it for him to come back to the outfit when he's okay."

And then came the last word the regiment was to receive for many a day.

"What do you know about this . . . Jim's skipped out of Nice—gone AWOL. Brent says he thinks Jim's gone back to looking for the mare again."

THE soldier trudging along the road was tired and thirsty and covered with the white dust of Verdun. Around here, thought Jim Thomas, it still looked as much shot up as it had when his outfit had served in this sector. This was still a land of shattered trees, trenches, and strands of rusty barbed wire, though it was late in the spring of 1919. They certainly had kept him a long time in the hospital and the convalescent area.

In a truck garden beside a farm house, he saw a young girl weeding. Jim, thirsty, halted and touched his overseas cap.

"Bon jour, mademoiselle."

"Bon jour, m'sieu," the girl smiled.

"Avez-vous de l'eau?"

"Mais certainement, m'sieu. Attendez."

She brought him the water, her brown eyes sparkling up at him. A sweet kid.

"I speak the Eenglish," she announced proudly.

"You speak it fine, too," Jim grinned.

They sat together on a bench in the sun. Jim sighed. It was a nice country, this France, but he'd seen too much of it.

The child was chattering on. He, she told him, was the first American soldier she had met and such a nice one. But her papa had an American horse.

"Horse?" Jim demanded. "Where?"

"In the field behind the house, plowing with papa. I—"

"Come on. Let's see. What's your name?"

"Renée, *m'sieu.*" She gave him her hand and they hurried around the house into the field.

Barbara saw Jim first. She halted in a furrow and neighed a joyous, poignant welcome.

At long last they had found each other. Jim Thomas fondled the mare, rubbing the scar on her shoulder. Barbara, questioning, nosed his empty sleeve. How shaggy she was! How tired she looked! Jim swore under his breath. This little mare pulling a plow!

While the dumfounded Drouet leaned on his plow handles and gaped, Renée interpreted as best she could, half delighted, half dismayed.

"So? She was once yours?" Drouet said. "Yet she is mine now. I bought her and I paid for her."

"You've got to give her back!" Jim Thomas declared.

"I must?" snapped the ex-poilu. "Who says I must?" Then and there, Verdun was close to seeing a post-war battle.

The American pulled out a prodigious roll of francs—back pay and the proceeds of a lucky night at craps at Nice. They went back to the house and made out a bill of sale.

CHAPTER IX

THE REGIMENT'S OWN

For me the crossed cannons—
They never will run—
The limber and rolling
caisson,
The trace and the collar,
The rumble of gun,
As we follow the Red Guidon.

Gerald E. Griffin: *The Red Guidon.*

The tumult and the shouting drifted up to Headquarters. It swelled louder and louder. The officer of the guard swore and leaped into action.

Billets boiled over with running. The horses on the picket lines snorted and kicked.

At the head of a cheering throng rode Sergeant Jim Thomas on the chestnut mare. He was obviously pleased but painfully embarrassed. But Barbara was eating it up. She stepped high and tossed her right and left.

Never was such a homecoming. The parade came to a halt before the smiling colonel, the regiment's former second in command. Jim Thomas, redder than ever, swung from the saddle and saluted smartly with his good right arm.

"Sir, Sergeant Thomas, Batt'ry 'D', reports with the mare, as ordered."

The staff welcomed him, shaking his hand all around. The colonel gave him assurance that it would be managed somehow to keep him on duty with the regiment, one-armed though he was. Jim spent the rest of the day telling his story and trying to keep Barbara from being made sick by admirers who had raided the mess halls for sugar. The evening demanded no less strenuous efforts from him to keep his head above a sea of German beer. That he more or less succeeded was testified by the fact that he took one of the legs of Stable Sergeant Michael Quinn when that roaring celebrant was carried back to his billet.

A week later Thomas received instructions.

"'Tis the colonel's orders," Quinn informed him, "that you're to enter the mare in the regimental horse show. I'm not asking if you can ride her, and you minus a wing, for I know you can."

"I reckon," said the other quietly. "I'll get her in shape. You'll see she can outjump anything in the outfit."

Captain Brent walked up, frowning.

"Wait a bit," the officer interposed. "There's a rub. Barbara isn't a battery horse any longer. She was regularly condemned and sold out of the service. Sergeant Thomas here bought her back with his own money. As private property of an enlisted man she can't jump in the show."

The two sergeants looked nonplussed.

"I forgot about that, sir," Jim Thomas admitted. "But—look here. Why can't I sell her back? It's not the money I care about, of course. But I'd like to have her do her bit for the honor of the battery—and she'd like to, too."

"It'll take some wangling, but I think I can put it through," said Brent.

Barbara, as Jim promised, could and did outjump anything in the outfit. Furthermore she could outjump anything in the division. Her quiet-mannered master strove hard not to show his pride. There were other worlds to conquer. The grapevine had it that a corps horse show would be scheduled, and a corps comprised many mounted organization, including cavalry, which would furnish stiff competition. Thomas, relieved of most of his other duties, trained the mare carefully, calling up the lore he had learned in the days when he had worked with thoroughbreds in Kentucky.

The little mare was a natural jumper. Unridden, she cleared broomsticks, held shoulder high, with the grace and rhythm of a wild thing. However, as Thomas well knew, jumping with a man up was

a different matter. Then it became a duet—at its best a perfect collaboration between rider and horse. He taught Barbara not to rush her fences but to approach them at a steady gallop, facing them squarely, never at an angle. Riding forward, he would gather her for the leap with gentle pressure of bit, and heels, yet always allow her to decide when to take off.

But one day Brent sought him out at the stable. "Sergeant, I suppose you're prepared for the day—the day when—"

"What day, sir?"

"The day when we have to turn in our horses."

The sergeant's face paled under its tan. "Why, *we* don't do that! That's just the National Army outfits. They're going to be mustered out. We're regulars. Our regiment'll stay in the service. It'll need its horses."

"Right. But there's horses in the States. Orders are we dispose of the ones we have here. Got to leave them in Europe. There's no cargo space for 'em."

The Texan's eyes flashed. "That's the lowest, damndest trick I ever heard of! Didn't they fight the war with us!"

"Steady, man," the lieutenant warned. "You can't buck the Army. You can't smuggle the mare aboard ship the way 'B' Battery did its mascot dog coming over. I've been thinking about this problem ever since I knew about the orders. And I'm not the only one. It's been talked over at the officers' mess often, and we can't see any way out. The strict ruling is that any officer who brought over a personal mount is entitled to take it back with him. If an officer didn't bring a horse of his own to France, there's absolutely nothing doing on taking one back."

"I'll be damned if—"

"Hold on now. I've got another plan.

"We'll get some kind-hearted Kraut to buy her in. Maybe next year we can get her shipped back home."

Thomas looked into the distance. "There's going to be trouble in this country after we leave," he predicted. "But any man who loved horses, Heinie or not, would be good to Barbara. Reckon that's the best that can be done, sir."

Gently Roushan Beg caressed
Kyrat's forehead, neck, and breast;
Kissed him upon both his eyes,
Sang to him in his wild way,
As upon the topmost spray
Sings a bird before it flies. . . .

Kyrat, then, the strong and fleet,
Drew together his four white feet,
Paused a moment on the verge,
Measured with his eye the space,
And into the air's embrace
Leaped as leaps the ocean surge.
Longfellow: *The Leap of Roushan Beg*

It was the final afternoon of the carnival of sports, staged by the American Army of Occupation. Blue and gold in the sun, the waters of the Rhine swirled around the island, just above Coblenz, where the walls of the new stadium rose. Ten stables housing the seven hundred horses taking part in the show flanked the great structure. Emerging from one of them, Stable Sergeant Michael Quinn walked toward a stadium where he was hailed by Captain John Brent, waiting for him in an entrance.

"Sergeant," Brent said, returning a salute, "I sort of thought you and I ought to watch this last big event together. After all, you and I knew Barbara from the first. You might say we stood as her godfathers."

"We did that, sor. Is the captain sure he wouldn't rather sit in the officers' stand?"

"Positive. We'll stand by the barrier opposite the middle jump. You've just come from the stable, haven't you? How's the mare?"

"A bit tired, I'd say. But she'll do."

"No wonder she's tired. Man, she's done magnificently! When you and Thomas won the pair jumping yesterday, Barbara and that sorrel of yours went over every jump in perfect step. And this morning Barbara plain ran away with the enlisted men's jumping class."

"But now it's the open, sir. Champeenship of the A. of O., they say. The mare'll be jumping aginst officers' mounts—thoroughbreds and the like."

"Sure, but she'll come through. Thomas all right? Nervous?"

"Not that lad. If he is, he don't show it, sir."

Within the arena, decorated with evergreen boughs and arches bound with bright-colored bunting, bands were playing. Its rising tiers were black with many thousands of spectators.

There was a commotion, then a hush. Contestants in the open jumping class were riding into the ring—officers, in rank from colonel to captain, on strong, splendid mounts whose glossy coats glistened in the bright light. Last, a little late, entered a sergeant of artillery on a small chestnut mare.

The regiment was up first, madly cheering its own. The division was on its feet, too, claiming them and acclaiming them. There was no field artilleryman in the stadium who did not rasp his throat raw, nor any soldier of any arm of the service who did not cheer them to an echo. The story of these two had spread through the Army of Occupation. Gallant horse and gallant rider, with his empty left sleeve pinned to the breast of his tunic! The tumult surged and sank and surged again like great breakers thundering on a rocky shore, as men who felt a lump in their throats and moisture in the corners of their eyes gulped, winked and cheered themselves hoarse again.

Up went Barbara's ears. She stepped along in time, like the veteran she was, while Thomas, swallowing hard, sat her straight and proudly.

One of the judges in the stand turned to another.

"That little chestnut mare," he indicated. "Is it true she has no breeding?"

"Yes, she's not in the book," came the answer. "They claim in her regiment she came off a range out West. But she's got blood in her from somewhere."

"Right you are. She's done marvelously in the show so far. But she's out of her class now."

Orderlies had arranged six fences on the circuit, with the bars at three and one-half feet. Every entry breezed around without difficulty, although superiorities of form were noted. Up went the bars to three-feet-nine. Now horses began to drop, ruled out for tipping, for knocking down the top bar or for refusals. At four feet, a stiff course, the casualties came thick and fast.

Then it was that the regiment's new major was eliminated. After making five leaps handsomely, he dropped the timber on the sixth. Smiling like the sportsman he was, he rode past Sergeant Thomas.

"Heah's wishing you luck, Sergeant," he said in his soft Virginia speech. "Reckon it's up to you to carry through. Might have done betteh on my otheh horse, but he's undeh the weatheh. Couldn't beat that mare of yours anyhow. Best of luck."

OVER the bars at 4.3-at 4.6-at 4.9 soared the little chestnut, while her competitors dwindled fast. The stands were heaving, uproarious waves of olive drab, with a spray of overseas caps flung high in the air. The dignified Secretary of War was observed barely to have restrained himself at the last moment from slapping Belgian royalty on the back. A Colonel of Polish Cavalry, sitting next to the colonel of Barbara's regiment, exploded with a string of consonants from which a few words of broken English finally filtered: "That mare—I buy her—much money!" "Not for sale—not if I can help it," the American emphatically assured him.

The judges ordered the bars of that last fence put up to five feet. Only two horses were now in the running: Barbara and a magnificent black thoroughbred, ridden by a young captain of cavalry.

Jim Thomas, dismounted, waited while his opponent rode out into the course. How tired the little mare was! She was breathing hard, and her coat was sweat-streaked. He'd been a fool, Thomas moaned, to ride her this morning, yet he never had believed she had a chance in the Open this afternoon. Contritely he patted her on the neck.

"I know, old girl, I know," he said to

her. "Tired as you are, you won't let me down."

The black thoroughbred, expertly ridden, was doing his blue blood proud. Over the first five jumps he sailed, galloped hard for the five-footer and drew an arc over it like a howitzer trajectory. Tumultuous cheering rewarded the fine performance.

Brent and Quinn saw Thomas stroke the mare's forehead and whisper something into an ear. He mounted up, rode to the head of the course. Barbara stepped out springily, head up, all her fatigue appearing to have melted away. They halted at the line.

"Now," said the rider softly, and the mare leaped forward.

Rat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat, drummed her hoofs in the deep silence. A sudden hush in the miniature thunder, as she took off for the first jump. Then that flight through the air which, for a true horseman, no plane can surpass. *Rat-tat, rat-tat*—fore and hindfeet alighting. Once again the stirring staccato of the gallop.

Two-three-four-five-fences. She was over them all. Ahead, seeming like a mountain, loomed the last high jump.

She looked so small, the little mare, approaching that towering obstacle. Surely it was too much for her, too much for even her valiant, faithful spirit. Not a man of all those thousands in the stands but sat breathless on the edge of his seat and with all the strength of his will prepared to help lift her over that jump.

Most of all, the man on her back. If you throw your heart over a fence, they say, your horse will follow it. And Jim in those fleeting seconds, threw his.

The tattoo of hoofs rose to a crescendo, ceased. The mare sprang upward. Neck far outstretched, forelegs doubled, haunches gathered under her, mane and tail flowing, she soared, poised over the top bar a fleeting instant for a glimpse which portrayed the purest poetry of motion. Then, gliding down, she alighted with infinite grace and galloped on.

Jim Thomas never heard the tremendous outburst of cheers that rocked the stadium as he rode to the judges' stand. He dreaded too much what he expected to hear there, and hear it he did.

"There'll have to be a jump-off," was the ruling. "Raise the bar on the last fence to 5.3."

Barbara, her flanks heaving, was trembling in every limb. The cavalry captain turned his big black toward the course, but Thomas swung out of his saddle and addressed the senior judge.

"Sorry, sir," he said. "Count me out."

"That gives the championship to the black," the officer warned. "Think your mare is likely to refuse this time?"

"No, sir, not her," Thomas flashed back. "She'll jump if it kills her. But she's done in, and I'm not going to ask it of her."

They pinned the blue ribbon on the black's bridle, the red on Barbara.

Rubbing her down in the stable, the sergeant heard footsteps. He and Barbara looked back to see a circle of familiar faces. General Mack, now commanding the brigade, was there, with the colonel, the adjutant, captain Carrick, Brent, First Sergeant McNally, and Quinn.

"Sorry we couldn't bring it off, sir," Jim Thomas said to the colonel.

"Wouldn't have had you do otherwise than you did, Sergeant," that officer answered cordially. "We're all right proud of you both."

"Have to try somehow to take this mascot of the regiment back home with us," General Mack put in. "It won't be long now before we leave. I can't deny we'll face plenty of trouble trying to take the mare along."

"If the mare has to go up at auction, I know a Polish colonel who'll bid his head off to get her," the regiment's commander declared.

The circle relapsed into gloomy silence. Thomas, his face hard, rubbed Barbara's slender legs with straw.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen. That was mighty fine jumping today."

It was the major from Virginia who had joined them. Except for an abstracted nod or two, none of the melancholy group around the stall paid any attention.

"Mighty fine jumping," the major repeated. Still he was ignored. How could he, a newcomer to the regiment, they reflected, understand the sadness filling

That flight through the air which, for a horseman, no plane can surpass.

the hearts of these men who had known Barbara for so long?

"I've just had some bad news," the major persisted. "Just had word my otheh horse—the one I couldn't ride today—has glanders. Has to be detroyed. Now I brought two personal mounts oveh heah and I'm entitled to take back two. I reckoned I might—if you-all agree—take this little mare heah back as my second mount."

That was how Barbara sailed back home with her regiment.

CHAPTER X

TALE OF TWO VETERANS

Ballade

Hail and farewell, old horse, to you
Our comrade of the Russian Ride,
Night march, maneuver and review,
And of the polo field beside.
Our pet, our pest, and yet our pride
Much of our heart goes with you still
As with the Eighteenth Field astride
You take the last long road to Sill.

From Rhine to Rio Grande, we two
Have taken battle in our stride.
The prairie sun, the ocean blue,
Have tanned and toughened up our hide,
Hunger and fear and wounds have tried
All of our courage and our will.
We lose a comrade from our side—
You take the last long road to Sill.

At Fort Sam Houston you're all through—
Motors don't wait for time or tide;
And as you slowly pass from view
We crank 'em up and let 'em slide.
But with this thought we're satisfied—
Elysian fields lie o'er the hill
To horse and buggy days it's tied.
So take the last long road to Sill.

Envoy

Old Horse—the Gods can still provide
Polo, the hunts, and mounted drill.
You'll be as welcome as a bride;
So take the last long road to Sill.

—J. N. G.

THROUGH the Texas city of San Antonio, past the historic Alamo, a rancher rode. His chestnut mare was old, close to her thirties, but she was trim and light-footed still.

Beyond the city the Stars and Stripes, fluttering from a tall staff, marked the Army post of Fort Sam Houston. The mare, catching sight of it, quickened her pace, and her rider's gray eyes brightened. They passed through the gate and headed for the artillery barracks. A gap between buildings gave a glimpse of troops forming on the parade ground.

Suddenly the horseman swung his steed across the path of a soldier hurrying, head down, toward the gate.

"Hold up there, Mike Quinn," he called, dismounting. "What's your hurry?"

The sergeant halted and looked up.

"Jim Thomas and Barbara, no less!"

he greeted. "You old-timers was due to be paying us a visit again. You ain't dropped over for a year."

"Been busy on the ranch," Jim explained. "First chance Barbara and me had to take a *pasear* over here and see old friends."

Barbara stamped a forefoot and moved her head in between the two men.

Thomas laughed. "Mike, she don't like being left out of a conversation. I swear she understands a lot of talk."

Quinn patted the mare's neck and spoke to her. " 'Tis rude I was, old dear. And how are you?"

Her master answered for her. "She's fine. We ride the range together still, pretty near as good as ever. She don't need a bridle. My voice and knees are enough, and I've got my arm free for roping."

Quinn faced the mare again. "Barbara, how's them rip-snorting stallions you was keeping company with back in your younger days?"

Barbara turned her head aside with matronly dignity.

"They've gone out of her life," Thomas grinned. "But she's fond of her offsprings. She's counting on seeing now that filly of hers I gave Major Brent. That filly's colts, Barbara's grandsons, belong to our kids. It's all in the family."

Bugles were blowing the "Assembly." Quinn hastily turned toward the gate again. "I ain't standing that formation," he said. "I'm off to town."

"What's wrong? Need a drink?"

"Never more then now. You ain't heard the news. We're losing our horses forever. The regiment's been motorized."

"Hell no!" Jim Thomas was plainly shocked.

"Yep," Quinn groaned. " 'Tis truck-drawn we'll be from this day on. We'll be feeding and watering at gas stations. We'll be picketing at tourist camps. We'll go into action—if we can find parking space. If the enemy shows a red light, we'll stop dead. Wurra, wurra! I hope we break down, and little boys hollers at us, 'Git a horse!' "

"Reckon it had to come," Thomas said sadly. "But there'll still be some horsed field artillery, won't there? There's country where trucks and tractors can't go."

"Our nags goes to some of them outfits at Fort Sill and the like," Quinn confirmed. "They'll still be horsed. But the boys here is broken up. Lots of the drivers had their pitchers took with their pairs. The colonel says the regimental toast is now going to be, 'Stand to heel, men!' 'Bye, Jim," he called, leaving. "I'm off to drink that toast."

Thomas rode toward the parade ground. He reined in by the side of a barrack, where his presence would not be noticed.

"We don't want to be seen, Barbara," he told the mare. "Might make the boys feel worse."

Side by side, the man and the mare stood quietly watching.

Officers and men of the regiment were formed along both sides of the route of departure, paying their last respects, saying farewell. Down that long avenue wound the horse column, teams with guns and caissons and led pairs. The khaki ranks doing them honor stood at rigid attention.

Bands crashed into the "Caisson Song."

"Over hill, over dale,
We will hit the dusty trail". . . .

Jim Thomas and Barbara drank in the well-loved strains to their close. Now the last of the column was clearing the Post. Again the bands struck up and poured forth the poignant chords of *Auld Lang Syne.*

Jim gulped as hard as he knew his old comrades out there were doing. He put an affectionate arm around the mare's neck, then climbed into the saddle.

"Come on, Barbara," he said. "That's all we can take. Let's be going along."

The mare stood, as if waiting for something.

Out on the parade, the new rubber-tired guns of the regiment thundered in salute to the vanishing column.

The old war horse snorted and pawed the earth. Through the drifting smoke, she turned homeward.

"I've still got one shell left!"

GAMBLER'S DOLLAR

By W. C. TUTTLE

FLINT ORR, sheriff of Mojave Wells, awoke slowly and painfully. A heavy weight seemed to bear down upon his brain, as his mouth was as dry as ashes. He tried to remember what he had drunk or ate, but his memory was blank as to details. Painfully he rolled over on his side, staring red-eyed at the battered alarm clock on the little table near the bed.

"Nine o'clock," he muttered. He was in his own bedroom, sprawled in all his clothes. Not even his boots had been removed. He lifted a heavy head and looked at the boots. Not for years had he been so drunk that he forgot to undress.

But had he been drunk? He rubbed the stubble on his heavy chin. Of course he had not been drunk. Why, he hadn't been drunk in three years, not since he became sheriff. He had sworn off drinking at that time. But what was wrong with everything? Why was he in bed, fully dressed, at nine o'clock in the morning?

He listened closely, but there was not a sound in the house except the ticking of that confounded clock. With a sweep of his big right hand, he knocked it off on the floor, where it ceased to tick. Funny that there should be no noise in the house. Ann should be doing her work.

Flint Orr licked his parched lips. Where was Ann? Damn it, he was tired of her whining. Couldn't she understand that a sheriff must do his duty, even to hanging his own son for murder? Blood didn't make any difference. Harry Orr had killed, just like any other man might kill, and he must pay the penalty. Women have strange ideas of duty.

He managed to swing his feet off the bed, where he sat, holding a throbbing head between his hands. Flint Orr was

a huge man, thewed like a bull, with a huge mane of iron-gray hair on his large head, like the roach on a grizzly. His face was heavy, his eyes small and brown, under bushy brows, and he never seemed to laugh.

Men hated and respected him—hated him for his bull-headed, ruthless way of serving the law, but respected him for his honesty of purpose. Ann Orr, his wife, barely past thirty, was loved by everyone—except, possibly, Flint Orr. Harry Orr was not her son, but she had fought tooth and nail to save him from the gallows. Flint Orr did not admire her for this. In fact, he resented it. There was no question of Harry's guilt.

Harry worked for the Circle Seven cattle outfit, ten miles north of Mojave Wells. Harry and Ed Belt, the foreman, had quarreled over a girl, and came to blows at the ranch. Harry had followed Belt to Mojave Wells, where they quarreled again over a poker game, but others intervened, stopping possible gunplay.

Later that evening Harry Orr and Ed Belt went to get their horses, when several shots were fired. Harry, who had been drinking heavily, staggered into the Trail Herd Saloon, babbling that Ed Belt had been killed. His own gun was reeking of freshly-burned powder, but he told a vague tale of shooting at the man who had shot Belt. Belt was killed by a .45 bullet—and Harry carried a forty-five Colt.

Flint Orr lifted his head, listened again, swore painfully and got to his feet. There was a coffee cup and saucer on the table, still stained from coffee. Flint Orr tried to remember that Ann had fixed a cup of coffee for him, when he was ready for bed. No, that wasn't it. He was always in the habit of getting up at six o'clock. Then he remembered.

"I got up and dressed," he told himself. "It was before six. Ann had the coffee all made, and gave me a cup. But —what the hell!"

His eyes caught sight of a sheet of paper, braced against the lamp. On it was written in pencil;

> Don't look for me—ever. I have gone away, because I can't stand it any longer.
>
> Ann.

Flint Orr's jaw sagged as he read the message.

"Gone away?" he questioned aloud. "Why, she never—"

Overtaken by a sudden rage, he tore the paper into bits, flinging them aside, and went striding into the kitchen. There was no sign that breakfast had been prepared.

A cigar butt was balanced on the edge of the wood stove. Flint Orr did not smoke.

Cursing bitterly, he yanked his sombrero over his eyes and headed for the main street, staggering just a little bit. His head still ached, and his knees were none too strong. He found Jack Handley, his deputy, waiting in front of the office, which was part of the jail. In a fenced-in vacant lot beside the jail, was the roughed-in gallows, where Harry Orr was to pay the penalty of his crime.

Jack Handley looked curiously at Flint Orr.

"I was just about to come lookin' for yuh, Flint," he said. "Couldn't feed the prisoner until yuh came with the keys."

Flint Orr was feeling in his pockets for the keys, a scowl on his face.

"Did Ann go away on a visit?" asked Handley.

"Eh?" grunted the sheriff. "What about Ann?"

"Billy Hart, over at the livery-stable, said that he seen her ridin' away with a feller early this mornin', goin' toward Painted Rock."

Flint Orr stared at his deputy.

"What feller?" he asked dully.

"Billy didn't say. What's the matter with yuh, Flint? Man, yuh look like the breakin' up of a hard winter."

The sheriff shook his head, like a fighter, trying to rid his brain of a numbing shock.

"I ain't got no keys," he said huskily. "I had 'em some'ers—"

"You shore look like you've been doped, Flint."

Doped! That was it. That coffee. It tasted queer, too, come to think of it. But why? Flint turned and staggered down toward the gallows, where he stopped below a barred window.

"Harry!" he called. "Harry Orr! Come to the window!"

But Harry Orr did not come to the window, because Harry Orr was not in that cell. With a hammer from the blacksmith shop, they broke open the office door. A glance showed that the cells were empty. Gray-faced, Flint Orr slumped at his desk, and cursed the woman he had married. She had doped his coffee, stolen his keys, turned a murderer loose, and ran away with another man. The curious crowd silently moved away, leaving only Jack Handley, the deputy.

Finally Flint Orr jumped to his feet, facing Handley.

"Why don't you do somethin'?" he roared. "Why in hell don't you say somethin'?"

"All I've got to say is that—mebbe she's right, Flint."

Flint Orr smashed the smaller man on the jaw, knocking him against the office wall, and as Handley swayed uncertainly, Flint Orr forcibly tore the insignia of office from Handley's shirt and flung him aside. Then he walked out and went straight to his little stable, where he saddled his fastest horse, Red Shadow. He shoved a rifle into his saddle-scabbard, belted an extra supply of cartridges around his waist, and got heavily into the saddle.

Jack Handley staggered out onto the sidewalk as the sheriff rode past.

"Poor fool," muttered Handley, rubbing a swelling jaw. "Headin' into the old Mojave, without even a canteen of water."

But Flint Orr knew where he was going. Twenty miles away in Jackass Canyon, Harry Orr owned a prospect hole and a dug-out shack. This was where Harry Orr would go. He always kept food and guns there.

"I'll get him," swore the sheriff between clenched teeth. "No man ever got away from me. And then I'll find that woman and her feller, if I have to comb the whole damn world."

After a mile gallop Red Shadow drew down to a walk. A hundred and twenty in the shade—and no shade—quickly takes the run out of even a desert-raised horse. But they were many miles from Mojave Wells before the sheriff realized that he had no water. No use going back now. He dimly remembered something that Harry had said about there not being any water at the mine, and that he had to pack in what he used.

Flint Orr cursed bitterly, his eyes on the break in the distant line of hills marking Jackass Canyon. He'd find Harry there and bring him back, dead or alive. He'd show Mojave Wells that kinship meant nothing in the line of duty. Then he cursed Ann, the woman who had betrayed him. Ann was still young, still beautiful—damn her soul! He tried to puzzle out just who the man might be. It could be one of many men. But no matter.

He would kill that man. But first he must recapture Harry Orr. Duty first, domestic troubles later.

FAR out on the road toward Painted Rock a team and buckboard went slowly along in the dazzling heat and sandy dust. A young man and a young-looking woman were on the seat. In the back was a weather-beaten trunk and some dusty-looking packages. A canteen dangled from the back of the seat. The man said;

"I feel yuh done wrong, Ann. You ain't got no place to go."

"Any place is better than where I lived," the woman replied, her eyes fixed ahead. "I couldn't stand it, Harry."

"Yeah, I know," he said gently. "But look at us, Ann. I'm a fugitive from justice, a condemned murderer. You've quit my father, and you ain't got any place to go. No money, nothin'. Mebbe we can beat the news to Painted Rock. I can climb on a freight train and try to get out of the country. But what about you, Ann?"

"Don't worry about me, Harry. I'll get along. No job on earth, would be as hard as living with a man who thinks so much of duty that he'd hang his own son. Duty! My God, where does duty stop or begin?"

Harry Orr unhooked the canteen and they drank sparingly, as they watched the road behind them.

"He'll follow us," she said.

Harry Orr nodded and slapped the team with the lines. Inside the waist-

band of his overalls was a Colt .45, fully loaded—and Harry Orr was a good shot.

"You won't let him take you, Harry?" she asked.

"I've been thinkin' about it, Ann," he said slowly. "Life's a queer thing, when yuh put it on the balance. My life or his—and he's my father. He was all right until he became sheriff, Ann. You know that as well as I do. But it changed him. Duty and power. If he comes, with a gun in his hand, I—well, we'll see. A man's only got one life to fool around with, and he might harm you—if he got me first."

"I'm afraid, Harry," she said.

Suddenly her eyes caught a vagrant drift of dust, far ahead. Straining her eyes, she saw more puffs of dust, which could only mean a traveling horse or a vehicle.

"Someone coming, Harry!" she exclaimed. "We don't want anybody to see you. Drop off here and hide, while I drive slowly. When they're past, I'll pull up."

Harry Orr slid out of the seat and walked in behind a clump of Joshua palms, where he crouched. The buckboard went ahead slowly.

In spite of slow driving the buckboard was possibly a hundred and fifty yards beyond Harry Orr when the lone rider met Ann. Harry was unable to see who the rider was, but Ann had stopped and they were talking.

The man was a huge, hulking, hard-faced person, bearded, his hair long, heavily armed. His horse had been shot along the neck, and there was another bullet slash along its left hip, raw and inflamed, and the animal sagged weakly under the weight of the big man. Ann did not remember ever having seen this man before, but he had called her by name.

"Yuh don't know me, eh?" he snarled. "Too many whiskers, eh? Well, I know you, sister. Yo're the sheriff's wife. The wife of my dear friend, Flint Orr, damn his dirty hide!"

"You—you are Dave Sells! Why, I—"

"That's right, sister—Dave Sells. See this?" He lifted a canvas sack from the pommel of his saddle. "That's from the bank of Painted Rock. Damn their souls, they shot my bronc, but I got away. Left two of their beloved citizens in the middle of the street, studyin' astronomy. They're out behind me some'ers."

"I must be going on, Mr. Sells," said Ann. "I'm going to Painted—"

"Oh, no, yo're not, sister. Yo're goin' with me. By God, this is good! Me and the wife of my dear old friend. Hold on, now, don't yuh ever think yo're goin' any place! Set still, like a nice little girl, or you'll wish yuh had."

With no lost motions, Dave Sells stripped the saddle and bridle from his half-dead horse and flung them into the back of the buckboard. Then he shoved Ann aside and got into the seat.

"What do you mean?" she demanded hotly.

"Gawdsakes, yo're pretty when yuh git mad! What do I mean? Sister, I know a shack in this old Mojave where there's mebbe water and grub. That damn posse won't never look for buckboard tracks. Even if they did, the wind'll cover 'em in a few hours. Ain't many folks know about that there shack. That's why I use it. We turn off about a mile from here, and then me and you are lost to everybody. Don't look at me thataway, sister. Hell, I'm kind of heart. In fact, I feel kinder of heart right now than I have since yore husband and that yaller-hearted Ed Belt sent me up for stealin' horses."

"Ed Belt?" queried Ann huskily.

"Yea-a-ah—Ed Belt. Funny thing, sister, I came back to this country to kill Flint Orr and Ed Belt both. Well, I got Ed Belt, but I never got a sight notched on Flint Orr yet."

"You killed Ed Belt?"

"That's right, sister. Plugged him right at a hitch-rack in Mojave Wells. Some damn fool with Belt took a couple shots at me, and almost handed me a harp. I faded out for a month or so. Well, here's where we roll off the main road. Our shack's about eight, nine miles further on."

"They—they arrested Harry Orr for that murder," Ann told him. "He was the man who shot at you. The—the law didn't believe him."

"Well, dog my cats!" blurted Sells. "That's why they never tried to find

me, I'll betcha. Gawd, that was bull luck. Orr? Harry Orr? Say, that's Flint Orr's own kid, ain't he? Yea-a-ah! Well, are they goin' to hang him?"

Ann nodded miserably.

"Well, I'll be a sidewinder!" blurted Sells. "The sheriff's son—and Flint Orr will have to drop the trap. I shoot a man, and the sheriff hangs his own son for the crime—and I've got the sheriff's wife!

HARRY ORR, unable to hear what was said, and not understanding what the man had done, saw him jump into the buckboard and drive away at a swift pace. Running heavily in the sand, he reached the spot where the buckboard had stopped, and there he found Dave Sells' horse, spent and injured. The animal stood there, head down, and let Harry examine its bullet scrapes. His practiced eye saw that the poor brute had been ridden to the limit of its endurance, and its death was only a question of a few hours. Shoving the animal away from the road, he used up one cartridge in giving it a mercy death.

It was at least fifteen miles to Painted Rock, but Harry Orr knew that his only salvation was to reach that town and chance an escape by train; so he started to walk, traveling slowly, trying to puzzle out what had happened to Ann. There was no question that she had been captured by this man, but Harry felt that she was being forced to take him to Painted Rock, until he came to where they had turned off on the old road.

He sprawled in the meagre shade of a Joshua-palm and tried to figure out his next move. As far as he knew that old road led to nowhere, possibly made originally by Mexicans, hauling mesquite-root fuel, which they sold in Mojave Wells. However, he was not going to Painted Rock until he had found out where that buckboard had gone.

IT WAS late in the afternoon when Flint Orr rode his jaded horse into Jackass Canyon. The blackened rocks fairly sizzled with heat, but it was cooler in the blue shade of the canyon. Red-eyed, partly blinded, the sheriff searched the floor and walls for a sign of his quarry, but to no avail. He tied his horse in the canon and went on foot to the old dug-out shack, but it had not been occupied for months. There was some canned food, but no water.

He cut open the one can of tomatoes and slaked his thirst. The stuff was nearly hot, but at least it was wet. That one drink would have to suffice until he could get back to Mojave Wells, which he would not attempt until late at night, when the desert would cool.

As long as Harry did not come to Jackass Canyon, the sheriff was sure now that Harry had gone to Painted Rock. He cursed himself for acting too quickly, realizing now that the man with Ann must have been Harry, and that both of them had gone to Painted Rock. And here he was, twenty-five miles from Mojave Wells, and at least thirty-five miles from Painted Rock.

As the sun dropped below the rim of the cobalt mountains in the west, the sheriff crawled to a ridge, where he could look across the desert. The rocks were hot now, but within a couple of hours there would be a cooling breeze. He wondered if his horse could stand a thirty-five mile trip across the sand without water or food.

DAVE SELLS and Ann Orr reached the old shack in a thicket of cactus, mesquite and Joshua-palms. It was only one room, with adobe floor, window-holes, but no windows. There was a door, swung on raw-hide hinges, but with no lock or fastening. Sells unhitched the team.

"We've got a couple ridin' horses now," he chuckled, as he noted saddle marks on the backs of both horses. "Hell, sister, we ain't over thirty miles from Mexico. I got friends down there, south of the old Border. We'll head for there *mañana*—what do yuh say?"

Ann shook her head. She was in a desperate situation. Sells had little brains and absolutely no morals.

"No?" he queried with a wolfish smile. "Well, sister, you'll either go or you won't go no place. C'mon."

"You'd kill me?" she asked wearily.

"Just like I would a bug. You bein' young and pretty don't make a damn bit of difference to me, sister. Git into the shack!"

It was hot in there, but cooler than it was outside. Ann sank down on an old stool, while Sells sprawled on a bed-roll, between her and the open doorway.

"We'll have better than this in Mexico," he told her. "I know a place down there on the Yaqui River where nobody ever comes, except Yaqui. They're my friends. Mebbe, in a year or two, I'll come back here and make another good haul."

Sells rolled a cigarette. Ann's eyes opened wider, as he took a pinch of stuff from his vest pocket and sifted it on top of the tobacco before sealing his cigarette. He glanced up at her and grinned.

"Marajuana," he admitted. "Good for yore nerves, when yo're kinda fagged. Better'n whiskey."

Ann knew what that stuff would do to the smoker.

"I don't go crazy on it," he told her. "I jist take enough to make me forgit the hell I've been through. Yuh better let me roll yuh one, sister. You'll have plenty to forgit." Sells laughed heartily. "I only hope that the sheriff knows what happened to yuh."

HARRY ORR, ready to drop from exhaustion, stumbled onto the shack, and pitched headlong behind a patch of cactus, when a bullet tugged at his sleeve. Dave Sells had seen him from the doorway, just as the sun was nearly down. Marajuana had jangled Sells' nerves to the extent that he had jerked the trigger, instead of squeezing it.

Sells thought for a moment that he had scored a hit, and that mistake almost finished him, because Harry Orr's first shot struck the buckle of Sells' ornate belt a glancing shot, and nearly knocked the big outlaw back into the shack. Then Harry Orr crawled in behind some heavier cover and took stock of the situation. He had four shells left in his gun. His tongue was swollen and his lips cracked, but he knew he was a long ways from any available water.

In the shack, Dave Sells, swearing bitterly, proceeded to tie Ann's feet and wrists. He had no idea who the attacker might be, and in his present state of mind, he did not care much. He peered from a corner of one of the window holes, turned back and picked up the canteen, shook it, a scowl on his face. There was a wet spot on the adobe floor. Then he whirled on Ann.

"Damn you, yuh opened that canteen on me!" he rasped. "Not a damn drop left! No water!"

"The top came off when you threw it down there," she said. "When you drank that last time, you didn't screw it tight."

"Sister, I think yo're a liar. All right, we'll go to Mexico anyway. You'll go until yuh drop, and I'll leave yuh there. Thirst never beat me. I'll show yuh. By God, we'll head for Mexico tonight—now!"

"What about the man outside?" she asked.

"Huh? Oh, yeah—the man outside. Well, he can't stop us. No one man ever stopped Dave Sells, sister. I'll go out there and saddle the horses."

Sells stepped into the doorway and a bullet clipped a lock of hair from just above his left ear. He staggered back and slammed the door. Then he ran to a window hole and emptied his six-shooter, scattering his shots in every direction, hoping to score a hit.

Then he leaned against the wall and reloaded his gun. Slowly he counted the cartridges in his belt, a scowl on his face. Nine, besides the six in his gun. He had the rifle, with plenty of ammunition, but little good that was. He had dropped the rifle in the sand, with the action open that morning, and it was clogged with sand. It would require a screwdriver and some cleaning fluid to make it function again. Fifteen shots left—and he had no idea where the posse was that followed him from Painted Rock.

It was growing dark now. Ann could barely see Sells' face, as he sat there. Then she heard a voice calling softly;

"Ann! Ann!"

Sells sprang to his feet, and with a curse on his lips, he ran to the window

and began firing out into the gloom, until his gun was empty.

"Who was that?" he demanded, drawing back from the window. "Who was that, damn yuh?"

"I didn't hear anybody," Ann protested.

"The hell, yuh didn't! What's yore first name?"

"Mary," lied Ann.

"Oh!" Sells sat down on the bed-roll and began loading his gun again.

"Got to be careful," he muttered aloud. "Nine shells left."

He flung the door open and looked out. Fifty yards away, in a tangle of mesquite, cat-claw and sage, all as dry as tinder, flames were licking high. There were acres of it. As he looked a heavy clump fairly exploded, throwing a ball of fire high into the air. The shack was in no danger, because the breeze was taking the fire away.

Dave Sells cursed and slammed the door shut.

"Somebody fired the damn desert!" he roared at Ann. "Yuh can see the flames for fifty miles, damn his soul! We've got to git out of here! I'm goin' to git them horses—and I'll kill any man who tries to stop me!"

Sells flung the door open, gripped his gun and made a dash for the corner. Ann heard two bullets strike the side of the shack, and one of them only missed her by a few inches. Then she heard a fusillade of shots, as Dave Sells blasted back at Harry Orr. A few moments later Sells crashed through the doorway again, cursing bitterly.

"Got me through the left arm, damn him!" he gritted. "I think I got him, too."

"The horses?" Ann queried weakly.

"They're gone," Sells snarled. "We're walkin' to Mexico, sister."

Sells tore a strip from his shirt and bandaged his injured forearm, standing against the wall at a window hole.

"Only three shells left," gritted Sells, as he turned away from the window. "Mebbe one for that jasper outside, one for you—and mebbe one for me. Dave Sells never quits, sister, so don't worry."

FAR out on those rocks on the rim of Jackass Canyon, Flint Orr saw the flicker of that brush fire. It was little more than a twinkle of light, like a camp-fire a mile away, but it interested Flint Orr. Was it the camp-fire of the man he was seeking? Just a little west of the North Star. Swiftly he crawled off the rocks and headed back for his horse. There was a breeze now, but that did not slake his thirst.

The jaded horse nickered softly, but Flint Orr climbed stiffly into his saddle and headed back down the canyon. The bad men of the Old Mojave and the desert heat had never whipped Flint Orr, not even with the help of his faithless wife. On the flat of the desert he could no longer see that flicker of light, but he knew it was somewhere out there, and he was going to find it.

In a dim sort of way he realized that he was east of Mojave Wells, but well out on that angle between Jackass Canyon and Painted Rock. He remembered the flicker of light he had seen, but that

This Great OCTOBER Issue

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BLACK MASK

Is On Sale NOW!

was years ago. He wasn't going any place now. His face and arms were cut from mesquite thorns and he could taste the salt of the blood on his lips.

Suddenly his horse faltered, stumbled and went down, throwing Orr heavily in the sand. The fall aroused him to a memory of what he was doing out there, and where he was going. The horse was finished, but Flint Orr was going on. After a few rods he threw away his heavy rifle. The double belt of cartridges galled him. With fumbling fingers he unbuckled a belt and let it fall in the sand. That relieved him some. Then he went stumbling on in the moonlight, his burning eyes keeping a course by the North Star, which seemed to have a bad habit of moving around from place to place. Flint Orr laughed soundlessly.

"Playin' a game, eh?" he whispered hoarsely. "Tryin' to fool Flint Orr, are yuh? Go ahead. I'll play with yuh—fer keeps!"

HARRY ORR sprawled behind a clump of cactus a few yards from the closed door of the shack, as daylight came swiftly across the desert. Behind him and to the right was a blackened expanse of burned land, from which wisps of smoke still curled. Harry had a welt across one shoulder, where one of Sells' bullets had scored him. He had just one cartridge left in his gun, having used one to drive Sells back into the shack, when he attempted to go away and take Ann with him.

Harry had no idea how may cartridges Sells had left, but supposed that the bandit had a fair supply. A chilly wind swept across the desert, but the flare of sun behind the mountains beyond Jackass Canyon indicated that it would be plenty hot before long. He had heard voices inside the shack, so he decided that Ann was still all right.

The sun topped the mountains, striking squarely against the front of the shack. Harry saw a bearded face at a window hole, but he was not going to waste his last cartridge on an indefinite target. He would wait for the man to come outside. Harry had lost his hat, and the sun was beating down on the back of his unprotected head. His thirst had abated somewhat during the cold night, but right now he would almost have traded his last cartridge for a sip of water.

Harry did not know that Dave Sells and Ann were also suffering from thirst. He knew that the canteen on the buckboard was nearly full, when he and Ann took their last drink, before meeting Dave Sells.

There was no movement inside the shack, and that sun on the back of his head was becoming unbearable. He had just started to try and snake back to a more comfortable spot, when he heard a noise. Lifting his head a trifle and looking toward the still smoking burn, he saw a man a hundred feet away, head down, heading for the shack.

A second glance told him that this man was Flint Orr, bare-headed, his face grimy with blood and dirt. There was little left of his shirt. Harry tried to cry out to him, but his throat merely emitted a croak.

Dave Sells had seen him, too, and stepped outside. Sells called to the sheriff, who stopped short. Instinct caused him to reach for his gun. Sells fired, but missed. The sheriff stumbled to his knees, but lifted his gun and began firing. Evidently his bullets were going so far wide that Dave Sells laughed mockingly. When he fired deliberately at the sheriff, but missed again.

Then Harry Orr, staking his last cartridge, smashed a bullet into Dave Sells. It spun Sells around, but did not knock him down. The sheriff was staggering, trying to reload his gun. The three men were not over twenty feet apart now. Everything was quiet, when the sheriff lifted his head and croaked;

"My God, I throwed away the wrong belt!"

Dave Sells laughed, as the sheriff came staggering, an empty gun in his hand. The sheriff's eyes were swollen to mere slits, as he tried to focus them on Dave Sells. Harry came up to them, empty-handed. Sells paid no attention to him, nor did the sheriff. Sells was badly hurt and was only keeping up on sheer nerve.

"What's goin' on?" croaked the sheriff. "Damn it, I can't see."

"Keep back, both of yuh," warned Sells. "I've still got one shell left."

"Who are you?" asked the sheriff in a husky whisper.

"Don't know me, eh? Well, I'm Dave Sells, damn yore hide!"

"Dave Sells? No! Sells is still in the pen."

"Where you and that lyin' Belt sent him, eh? Well, he's not. He's right here, and he's got you where he wants yuh. I told yuh I'd come back and get yuh, Orr. I got Belt, and I've been waitin' for you."

"You—you killed Belt?" whispered the sheriff. "You?"

"I killed him at that hitch-rack in Mojave Wells. Oh, I know yore son was arrested and convicted. Yore wife told me all about that part of it. You was goin' to have to hang him. Too damn bad I didn't wait until he was hung."

"My wife?" croaked the sheriff. "Where's my wife?"

"Settin' right in that shack, Orr. When I settle with you two, me and her are headin' for Mexico. Git in that shack, both of yuh."

"You'll never get to Mexico, Sells," said Harry. "That last bullet stopped that move. Yo're dyin' on yore feet."

"Dyin', eh? Not Dave Sells. Git in there. Keep yore distance, you poor fool."

They entered the shack ahead of him. Ann, frightened and sick from her experience, her wrists and ankles roped, was seated against the wall. Dave Sells, still cautious, stood beside her, the heavy Colt in his right hand. He was bleeding heavily.

"Yo're all through," said Harry. "You can't get away. Throw down that gun, and we'll take yuh to Mojave Wells. We can get yuh to a doctor."

"Doctor?" croaked Sells. "What for? To save me for the rope? This suits me better."

A spasm of pain wracked his body and he clawed against the wall with his left hand.

"Think I'm goin' to die?" he snarled. "Well, I won't die until I do what I came here to do. I killed Belt. I paid him back. Now, I'm goin' to pay you, Orr. I wish I'd let yuh hang yore own son. You'd do that, Orr. They say that blood is thicker'n water—but not with you. One shell left, Orr. One—wait! Damn it, we'll gamble on this'n. Gimme a piece of money. Hurry, damn yuh!"

With fumbling fingers the sheriff took a silver dollar from his sagging vest pocket. Sells laughed insanely.

"One to go," he choked. "Call it, Orr. It's you or the kid. Heads for one, tails for the other. Call it."

"Heads, I take it," whispered Flint Orr.

"All right. Heads, you die, tails, the kid dies. Throw it! No—wait! I'll call it. Throw it—now!"

Flint Orr, with a weak motion of his hand, tossed the dollar and it fell to the dirt floor, square in the shaft of sunlight from the partly-open door. Even Ann tried to lean forward to see that shining bit of metal. It was Flint Orr who said;

"It's heads, Sells. Shoot!"

"You lie!" gritted Sells. "It's tails! The kid gets it!"

Sells lifted his gun swiftly, but as his finger tightened on the trigger, Flint Orr flung himself in front of his son, just as the flimsy shack shuddered from the concussion of the forty-five. Harry Orr flung himself into Sells, but the dying outlaw made no resistance.

There was a pounding of hoofs outside the shack and a moment later men were coming in. It was the posse, which had been trailing Dave Sells for twenty-four hours. They quickly cut Ann loose, and there were plenty of canteens on the saddles. Sells lived long enough to confess that he had murdered Ed Belt.

They found the team where Harry Orr had hidden it, and hitched it to the buckboard. Harry went back into the shack. The high heel of a cowboy had shoved that silver dollar deep into the dirt, but Harry dug it out. For a long time he looked at it, before going back to the buckboard, where Ann waited for him.

Silently he handed her the silver dollar. Ann looked at it, a puzzled expression in her eyes. Then she said:

"It was his lucky pocket-piece, Harry. He took it away from a tinhorn gambler. It has tails on both sides."

After all, blood had proved stronger than water.

"Come on, come on. The message, the message!"

BAPTISM OF FIRE

By GEORGES SURDEZ

THE four armored cars of the French reconnoitering group had halted at the side of the narrow road cutting through the woods, massive, sinister shapes lurking in the darkness. The crests of the trees were stenciled against the September night, but the dawn fog of the Saar Valley was gathering near the ground. The forest and the nearer fields were quiet, but the sky was thunderous in the distance, where heavy artillery crashed from the

fortified line before Schwalbach, flashing like heat-lightning.

A group of men had gathered around the prisoner standing in the roadway. They were young, strong fellows in leather jackets and khaki breeches, wearing the vizorless helmet of the motorized cavalry, a steel skull-cap with a thick leather shock-absorber in front. The captive was also young and strong. They had seen that when the lieutenant had flashed his torch briefly, revealing a wide, blond, rather handsome face beneath the metal bucket. They had seen, too, his startled blue eyes and the quivering of his mouth.

"You deserted?" the officer asked him.

"Why?"

"I don't believe in the present regime," the other answered. His French was accented, his voice hoarse. "For political reasons, *mon lieutenant.*"

"Politics, at your age?" the Frenchman was skeptical, somewhat scornful. He was a regular army man and did not understand political considerations when one's country was at war. "Come on—you were put here to fool us, eh? Who sent you? Why are you here?"

"*Ich bin besser ab hier als drüben, Herr Leutnant.*"

This time, the confused prisoner had spoken in his own tongue. Those who understood German repeated his remark in French for the others, and a general laugh rose. He had given an excellent reason now—he was better off here than over there!

"What do you think this is?" the officer was furious, seemed to notice for the first time that the majority of his men had alighted to gather near. "A market place? Do you want to get knocked off? Get the hell back where you belong." As the soldiers obeyed, he and a sergeant, an old chap who had served in '18, led the German lad aside. "Give me your papers."

"Haven't any, Lieutenant. Orders out against it."

"You needn't shout—"

The voices lowered, only an occasional word could be heard.

On his seat beside the driver of Car Number Three, Pierre Duclos, like the others, was gripped by a strong sense of unreality. This was war; the man he had just seen was a German soldier taken prisoner. Yesterday, he had seen the first bodies. Tomorrow, he would roll on further, into Germany. He could not believe it. No, he was dreaming, he had dreamed that silhouette bobbing up in the road so unexpectedly, and the almost fabulous word:

"*Kamerad.*"

Not a week before, he had been at work in a garage at a cross-roads filling-station, somewhere in Central France. He could still see, and count, the parts of a motor that had been laid on his bench, inside, near the rear window. What had happened to them? He might never learn, for when he had reached home, he had found an official summons to report to his regiment. That had not worried him much. Three times in one year he had received such a slip. He always got special notice, because he belonged to a crack outfit.

He had taken the night train, reached his regimental depot in the morning. He reentered the barracks in which he had spent eighteen months straight, when serving his regular army time. All his old friends were there, and his old enemy, Senior-Sergeant Bachon and Lieutenant Marsaquet, tall and slim, with his firm jaws and his steady blue eyes:

"I think this time there'll be breakage," the officer had informed them. "I hope you chaps will remember that before being on wheels this outfit was cavalry—and behave accordingly."

He had said that before.

"Bunk," a comrade had told Duclos, "they mobilize every time Hitler sneezes or coughs. He's bluffing again. He'll back down on that Polish gag tomorrow, then move in quietly as we heave a sigh of relief. You'll be home inside ten days."

AS TWICE before, the regiment had rolled out, at night, toward the east. Duclos, twenty-four, a good mechanic, rather enjoyed these outings after the monotony of his work. It was different for the married guys, for those with kids. Everything worried them, mostly their loss in time and wages.

For two days they had been quartered in a covered parking zone, part of the line. And suddenly, they had rolled out. And, as suddenly, someone had leaned out of a car excitedly, pointed to a smashed frontier post: "Eh, we're rolling into Bochemany!"

This was a queer war, all agreed. There was a lot of noise ahead, on the flanks. But there was nothing to be seen, nothing save the placid, lush countryside, the potato-fields, the green woods. The villages were practically empty. Once or twice he had seen an old woman seated in a doorway, calmly scraping vegetables. Then, yesterday afternoon, they had seen the first dead, a brace of Germans, in gray uniforms with dull buttons. Laid out neatly, ready to be removed, by the side of the road. And, fifty meters away, in a field, a smashed tank of strange type.

At dusk, the group had rolled through what was presumably the French front line, bound for the Rossel River bank. They had reached a higher spot, then turned back—to wait for orders. And it was here that the deserter had found them.

The fog was growing thicker. And somehow, war was assuming a reality it had lacked. There were living men before them, hiding in the night, men such as the fellow he had just seen. Or, as Lieutenant Marsaquet would say, better men, fighting men. Pierre Duclos, an average Frenchman, felt small scorn for the man. Some of his friends had said, not long ago, that they would give up if they had the chance. They did not talk that way now, however. Took a certain courage to carry it out, a sort of reverse bravery, a dark courage.

He himself intended to do his duty, his full duty. Probably, he reasoned, because he was of a soldierly clan. His father had been killed at Verdun, a sergeant of colonial infantry. His grandfather had returned from the Franco-Prussian War with a permanently stiff leg. Duclos smiled: He remembered the story, which he had heard a hundred times. Grandfather Duclos had been with the Seventh Dragoons, in the defense of Forbach, and his knee had been smashed by a Dreyse rifle's slug. Forbach—why, Forbach could not be many miles away, just a bit southeast, over the hills.

"Pierre," Old Duclos had said, when the boy had visited him on his farm, "you'll never be through what I went through, what your poor father went through. We have Alsace back. In a way, I am sorry, because war shapes a man. Every man should have a little of it. Yes, I say it, even though my oldest boy was killed. Makes you love life, and makes you love your country. Your country, boy, is like your family—you must stick to it when things are bad, because it's good to you when all is well.

"I understood that, that night near Grossbliederstroff. I had gone out with a patrol of my regiment, out of Saarbruecken, which the French had taken a couple of days before. Sure, I am one of the few Frenchmen who actually got into Germany during that war. While our patrol was out, the French evacuated Saarbruecken, and no one notified us. Our chief, a kid lieutenant, was killed. And we knew that we were surrounded, lost in the middle of the whole of Steimetz' Army. And we—there were ten of us left—held council and decided to break through separately. What a trip that was, with woods and fields swarming with Uhlans, Dragoons and Hussars. I made Forbach on the morning of August Sixth, and found Dragoons of our own there, those of the Twelfth Regiment.

"I stayed with them. One against ten, we were. We held for hours—"

Duclos recalled the details of the defense of Forbach, as told by his grandfather. The bombardment at night, the panicky flight of the civilians, the firing of the railway depot, the darkness streaked by the paths of red hot cannon balls. And at the same time, he recalled the ironical face of a middle-aged man, who had been with his father at Verdun. He would tease the old chap about his "pea-shooter" war, describe the mass attacks of the German army on Douaumont, the walls of men approaching like the rollers of a surf.

"Shells as big as a man, hand grenades, liquid fire—"

DUCLOS looked around, listened. The sky was screened by the fog. And the thunder of artillery crept nearer and nearer, the roar of motors rumbled in the night. Tools of war on the move, bigger, more formidable than even the Verdun veteran had seen. When the armies collided, what a battle it would be!

In spite of the woolen lining of his jacket, he shuddered. And he experienced an odd, choking sensation of impending danger. The man seated near him, the driver, was sneaking a smoke, holding the cigarette in the palm of his hand. He allowed Duclos a couple of drags.

"This is lousy," he opined. "Wish we'd do something, either go on or go back. This waiting here gets my goat."

He closed his fist, crushing the butt inside his gauntlet, as Lieutenant Marsaquet approached Car Number Three.

"Duclos."

"Here, Lieutenant."

"If I remember rightly, you were six hundred meter champion for the regiment. How would you like to stretch your legs?"

"All right, Lieutenant."

He hopped down to the road.

"Better leave your carbine here." Marsaquet made a hood of his military cape to screen his light, standing by the car and using the floorboards for a desk. There's an outfit of assault carts (tanks) on another road just across from here, maybe a kilometer. You'll hand this to the officer commanding. In case you lose it, just tell him that we got a tip from a prisoner. The bridge over the Rossek is down, and the ford marked on the maps is mined for tanks. You can say it's pretty sure dope, as we are holding the guy who supplied it."

"What do I tell him to do, Lieutenant?"

"Nothing. He's a major, I'm a lieutenant." Marsaquet laughed. "But they've probably strung a field-phone and he can report. Try to get back. We roll out around seven. You wouldn't want to miss it."

"Oh, no, Lieutenant."

"Can't miss it, Duclos. Straight that way."

"Understood, Lieutenant."

Duclos handed his carbine up to the driver, placed the note in the upturn of his cuff. He hesitated a second, climbed the embankment and started out through the trees, the night and the fog. Can't miss it, straight that way! That was easily said. Suppose he lost his way? But why argue with a superior?

There was a motorcycle and side-car with the group, with a sergeant to ride it. And there was a field-phone two miles down the road, which he had spotted coming up. Why couldn't the message have been sent there on the bike and have it relayed? Why? Maybe because a phoned message was practically anonymous, while a signed note by messenger was spectacular: Marsaquet was ambitious.

Possibly there were reasons he did not know of. A good many things were hard to understand, unless one was in the know. For instance, why had the armored cars held back now, waiting for daylight, when they would be targets?

Duclos knew what happened—he had seen the blackened hulks of several machines.

The sounds of fighting were circling the whole horizon now, and motors were pounding in the distance. Yet, around him, everything was still, suspiciously still. There were Germans around, that was sure. That prisoner had come from somewhere near. Perhaps there were Germans listening to the sound of his steps. Duclos could imagine them, crouched behind a machine-gun, an automatic rifle. Set, hard, gray faces under the rigid line of the big helmets, gray uniforms, gray bodies, gray as the fog of the night, gray as a sunless morning. . . .

Can't miss it, straight ahead that way. . . .

He was keenly aware of his intact, young body, of the soundness of his lungs, his heart, his limbs. A tiny piece of metal, no larger than the tip of his little finger, almost anywhere, and his superb machine of flesh and bones would

stagger, sink, drop by the way like a wrecked car.

Why had Marsaquet sent him? Perhaps because he did not want the message intercepted on the phone lines. Perhaps because to a man such as the lieutenant, a professional officer who had served in Morocco, who had decorations, a walk through the woods at night was nothing important.

The ground rose—he was climbing a hill. His heart beat in steadier rhythm. Surely, if the assault carts were on the main road, the next important road, he would not miss them. But, supposing that they were not there, that they had been delayed? What should he do? Supposing they mistook him for a German, gave him no time to call out?

He had reached a crest, passed from one tree to another. They were spaced regularly, almost as orderly as trees in a cultivated orchard. No need to worry about getting lost.

He was now on the opposite slope. Suddenly the ground opened under his feet; he fell for three or four feet, on soft, bare earth: a path, a trail. He got his bearing, started off again. And he came to another path, going in his direction. He reasoned that as roads go from village to village, paths led from road to road, and that if he followed this one, he would surely emerge on a main road.

THE light was increasing. He was whistling under his breath. He discerned the sides of the path now, the nearer bushes, the tree trunks with their swathing of fleecy fog. Looking up, he saw the leafage, like black iron cut-outs against the opaque sky. He felt better: This was war, he was carrying an important message, and there was the comforting pull of his automatic pistol at his belt.

A whitish stone by the roadside: A marker.

Duclos knelt, trying to read the worn letters. He could not, and his fingers, sweeping over the indented characters, failed also. Yet an overwhelming curiosity gripped him. Where was he? In the Saar region—but where? He would have to relate this later. For the war was new, and he could still think of "later" as a probability. He reached in his pocket, found a box of matches. He struck one, sheltering the small flame in his palms, craned his neck.

A dozen steel hammers smote the stone, a giant fist crashed against his shoulder, knocking him forward. The leather front of his helmet struck the stone. The helmet fell off. And the coppery, deafening crepitation continued.

A machine-gun—a machine-gun—

He rose and leaped forward.

For many seconds, running was an immense effort, a lumbering pull of will against dead weight. Then, suddenly, he felt no pain, his body grew lighter. His strides lengthened, turned to gigantic bounds, bounds that lifted him unbelievingly high into space, lightly, easily, airily. At this rate, he would reach his destination very soon.

One thought worried him. He was running faster than he had ever run, but he could not recall the one name, out of two or three names on the marker, which he had recognized in the fraction of a second between the striking of the match and the shots. A most familiar name, etched in stone, a name he had heard often, but a long, long time ago.

What was it? What?

He was gliding above the ground now, three or four feet clear, and his feet no longer touched the earth. Gliding, soaring with terrifying speed, darting in and out of the trees. Nothing could stop him, nothing. Lieutenant Marsaquet's face was before his eyes, he saw the braid on the extended sleeve.

"Can't miss it, Duclos. Straight that way."

"All right, Lieutenant. But tell me the name."

"What name?"

"The name on the marker."

The lieutenant's face vanished as Duclos remembered.

"*Emersweiler!*"

PIERRE DUCLOS approached the group of men camped on the side of the hill cautiously. Dawn had come, the day was breaking, and the mist shredding down the slope.

He counted ten, eleven—ten standing

or sitting, one stretched on blankets upon the ground, in the lee of a bush. The leaves of the trees were thicker, greener than Duclos ever remembered them. And he felt no pain in his body, seemed to move with amazing skill and rapidity, so that he saw them from all sides at once. They were young, strong men in strange, yet familiar uniforms: Military tunics of green cloth, with red facings, scarlet trousers and big boots ornamented with metal spurs. They wore great helmets that shone like copper, with a tall arched crest from which dangled a queue of horse hair. Not far away, tied to trees, were seven horses. Duclos counted them carefully, to make sure, because it was odd: Eleven men, seven mounts.

Their faces were weather-beaten, their clothing worn. Most of them showed big mustaches, only two were beardless. Beardless not because they shaved, but because they were kids. They carried heavy, clumsy-looking, old-fashioned weapons: Long, straight bladed sabers, carbines with thick, massive butts and barrels like water pipes.

"This damned fog will lift," one of them said, in French. "And then they'll find us. I, for one, think it's foolish to try to get away."

"Shut up, Reboul," a big fellow, with red chevrons on his sleeves, spoke, indicating the prostrate man ten feet away. "You could at least wait until—"

"Say, he'd be better off with a doctor. The Prussians aren't cannibals. They'd take care of him."

The big man with the reddish mustache and the chevrons came nearer to Reboul, grasped his arm, and whispered, although Duclos could hear every word clearly: "He's done for. Through the liver. I wouldn't even try to get him on a horse. He'll be gone in a couple of hours. Then we can do as we like. I don't intend to surrender."

Cavalryman Reboul struck a light with flint-and-steel, kindled his pipe: "Well, they beat it without tipping us off. If the whole damn army runs before the Prussians, Corporal, are the bunch of us supposed to lick them?"

"Do you want to get back to the regiment and get a chance to avenge yourself, Reboul? For forty-eight hours, they've been hunting us like hares. It's humiliating, that's what it is."

"Revenge?" The private shrugged. "Listen, this whole war smells punk to me, Corporal. Here we start into Germany, then, for no reason at all, we get out. If it's going to go on that way, I'd sooner not see it. As for hunting us, do you blame them? We killed seven or eight of their guys."

Duclos saw the corporal pull on his mustache, heard him rumble, "If I didn't know you were a guy with guts, Reboul, I'd report you for anti-patriotic speeches. Soon as we get back."

"That'll be a while, Corporal, the way things are shaping up. As for being anti-patriotic, that's bunk. I am against the Imperial Regime, Napoleon III and his Spanish drab. But I am a good Frenchman. It's just that I wonder why in hell we should be fighting to settle who'll be king of Spain."

Duclos watched and listened avidly. The picture before him had settled, com-

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, drive a lovely car, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You, too, may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you, too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 11, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use, too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again —Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 11, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

pleted itself from the conversation. Of course, those were French Dragoons, in Imperial uniforms. Talking about their war, as was natural. Some of his friends were saying much the same about the Poles, yesterday, as Reboul was saying about the Spaniards. He listened curiously for the corporal's answer.

"Reboul, you're a cavalryman, second-class. Leave the running of the nation, the politics, to educated fellows who know what it's all about."

"I'd make a better statesman than they would make cavalrymen," Reboul said quietly.

"But this guy Bismarck must be put in his place. He's grabbing everything. Look, he's licked Austria, and now he has the Bavarians with him. He thinks he can rule the world. The Germans are good people, really, but they're run by the wrong set. I was reading about it."

THE man stretched on the ground moaned, and a young private, seated nearby, went to him at once, lifted his head with careful hands. And, at once, all of them grouped about the sick man. Duclos saw his waxen face, with small, handsome features, and a mustache on the upper lip that was as scanty as a shadow. A man of another caste, an officer, obviously. Very young, certainly not more than twenty. And Duclos suddenly realized that he knew his name: Leon de Brecourt.

"Water—"

A large canteen was tilted against his mouth. Then he spoke again. "Where's the sergeant?"

"Killed last night, *mon lieutenant,*" the corporal replied. "Don't you remember?"

"Ah, yes. So, you're in charge, Corporal Frouart?"

"At your orders, Lieutenant."

"I was shot, wasn't I?"

"You were, Lieutenant."

"I'm going to die, eh?"

"Well, that isn't so sure."

De Brecourt smiled faintly. "Oh, I know—the liver is torn. That usually does the job. What's the situation, otherwise?"

"Ten men left, one wounded. Seven horses. We had to leave some behind. They'd been hit. But we followed your orders, Lieutenant. We made sure they couldn't be used by the enemy. We also managed to break the butts off the carbines left behind. Don't fret; the Prussians won't get anything."

"That's fine, Frouart. Get the map. That's it. Tell me where we are." The corporal opened the case, unfolded a worn map, spoke in a murmur. Then the officer resumed: "You're only a short distance from Emersweiler. That's on the frontier. You are to leave me here and make your way there. Report to the first French officer you see. Try to save the horses, but if it's impossible to pass with them, dispose of them and carry on on foot."

"We can't leave you here, Lieutenant."

"It's an order."

"Well—" The corporal hesitated—"I've been in service thirteen years, and never disobeyed an order. But I'll disobey that one."

"When was I wounded, Corporal?"

"Must have been around seven last night, when we broke through their lines down below."

"Nearly twelve hours ago. I shouldn't be in your way much longer. You'll leave me here. Later, you can indicate the spot, so that I can be found." De Brecourt paused for another drink, stifled a groan. "It doesn't matter to me, but my family will like to know. When you see the colonel, tell him I am sorry for the mess. I had a fine platoon. No one surrendered so far. Get the men together, Corporal."

"They're all here, Lieutenant."

"All right. I want you to do something for the regiment: Don't give yourselves up without a fight. I want no unwounded man from my platoon in the enemy's hands. I want your oath, each one separately. Corporal?"

"I swear, Lieutenant."

"And you—Gastinois?"

"I swear, Lieutenant."

"Reboul?"

"I swear, Lieutenant. But you can be sure it's for you and—"

"Duclos—"

Pierre Duclos started. His mouth opened to answer. But another man had come forward, to be seen by the wounded man. He was rather tall, broad-shouldered, with the sturdy limbs of a farmer.

"I swear, Lieutenant."

Why, Duclos thought, that's my grandfather, of course. Yes, he was here. One of the ten. It was curious to behold one's grandfather at one's own age, or even younger. Yes, there was a strong resemblance, as his mother had pointed out often.

"You take after your father's side, Pierre. Nobody in my family ever had that ugly hooked nose. But your intelligence comes from us. Grandfather Maturin was a notary."

AFTER that, Pierre Duclos lost much interest in the others, absorbed in watching that other Pierre Duclos, who had been young sixty-nine years ago. And it was odd to know that he would go on from here, find the road to Emersweiler, reach Forbach. And to remember that that right leg, on which he braced his weight so confidently, would be shattered and mangled. To know that these were the last strides he would take without limping!

Duclos wanted to speak to his grandfather, moved about to catch his eye, to attract his attention. Would the old man—who was young—recognize him—before he was born?

The lieutenant had closed his eyes again, was very still. And the men were scattered in groups of two or three, each carrying the heavy Chassepot carbine across his arm. Duclos' grandfather had gone up the slope, some distance away, and was looking down into the shallow valley, between the trees. Duclos felt a thrill of pride: There was a bird who had his mind on his job!

There was a sudden movement from the lieutenant. He had sat up brusquely, supporting his weight on his hands. The hurt of his wound must have been horrible. His face wrenched with agony.

"*Vive l'Empereur!*" he cried.

Long live the Emperor: Napoleon III, a sad, clownish figure, half-ruler, half-confidence man, who would surrender in three weeks to the hated Bismarck. A man with rotting kidneys, devoid of heroism and pride. A man whom even the most ardent Bonapartistes of the future would concede of small merit.

And that lad of twenty, who was dying, was shouting his faith in him! Duclos wished he could go to him, and tell him the truth. Tell him that what he was dying for was not worth while. Then the beauty of that faith itself struck him. Idols might be of vile metal, but their worshippers still could be sublime.

De Brecourt fell back, and the men rushed to him. He must have lost consciousness, for he gave his moans free play. His plaintive voice wrenched the heart. They dwindled, died out. Corporal Frouart leaned over him, touched his lids with careful fingers. Then he rose.

"He did it on purpose," he announced. "To cut our wait short and give us a chance to move on. And I say that the guy who goes back on his oath to him is a swine, and that I'll spit in his eye. That's what I say!"

"Don't worry, Corporal, and save your spit," Reboul told him. "We can't leave him like this."

They unsheathed their sabers and started to dig the ground, turning up big clods. Then one of them had an idea, and as the blades were used for picks, the helmets were used for shovels. They did not dig very deep. The young lieutenant was wrapped in his heavy cloak, a handkerchief placed over his face. Then, carefully, they laid him in the shallow grave, covered him with sod. After that, despite the rising sun, they scattered, to bring up heavy stones which they piled on the mound. When it was over, they stood for some seconds, irresolutely.

"Clean up," Frouart snapped at last.

They wiped their blades, their helmets. That did not take long.

"What do we do now, Corporal? Those slobs will be stirring in a few moments."

"Well, we don't intend to kill off good animals, and we can't leave them behind. So seven of us have to ride. The swine don't know how many of us are left, so when they spot seven riders,

they'll think that's the lot. While they chase those seven, three can make a break for the frontier on foot. I'll take one of the horses." He tore up a piece of paper, plied a pencil. "I'm putting these slips in my helmet. The three who get the marked papers walk."

THE nine men filed by, picked out their lot. And the three designated by fate stood aside. Duclos' grandfather was one of them, as Duclos had known he must be.

Again, there was a brief hesitation. They all looked toward the grave. And one of them, a young lad, went forward, removed his helmet and knelt by the ground. Corporal Frouart was on him in three strides, jerked him erect.

"That's not what he'd like, son. Line up—" The Dragoons drew up in a single file facing the grave: "Attention. Present—arms!" The carbines rose, were held rigidly. Frouart stood with his heels together, on parade: "*Adieu, mon lieutenant.*" Then this must have seemed somewhat brief, for he resumed, "We will carry out your orders as long as we are alive."

Four of them were doomed to die inside a year. Reboul and another that very morning, not five miles away, the third was to end in the snow at Villersexel. Corporal Frouart, become a sergeant, was bound for the common grave at Patay. Duclos watched them, and wondered whether foreknowledge of what would befall would alter their decision. Probably not.

"Ground arms! At ease."

"Do we go together or do we separate?" one of the trio asked.

"We have a better chance of sneaking through one by one."

They shook hands, and started out one by one. Two had vanished under the trees when Grandfather Duclos left the camping place. And there was nothing left, save the heap of stones.

PIERRE DUCLOS caught up with his grandfather.

The Dragoon was plodding along, his strides clumsy in his heavy boots. He had fastened his big saber over the saddle-bags slung on his back like a knapsack, to keep the scabbard from getting between his legs as he walked. He seemed tired and frightened, and the beard showed black on his jaws beneath the silken mustache.

"Eh, Gramp—" Duclos said, timidly.

The other did not turn, kept on, towards Emersweiler and Forbach. Pierre was at his side, touching his elbow from time to time, but he did not appear to know it. Away from his friends, from the corporal, his resolution seemed to waiver. Several times; he paused, looked about, ready to turn. He was considering giving himself up to the Prussians, that was clear. And that was what he had never told Pierre when he narrated the story.

"You must keep on," Pierre told him. "You must get to Forbach."

Yes, Old Duclos had to get to Forbach, to get behind the barricades with Dulac's Dragoons of the Twelfth Regiment. He must keep his appointment with that Dreyse missile. He must have sensed this himself, that Destiny had him by the nape of the neck and was urging him on, for he muttered:

"Yes, Lieutenant."

Then he shook himself and walked on, lifting each foot clumsily, for his soles were chafed from the march. A Dragoon, of course, fights astride and afoot, traditionally, but he rides to and from a battle. Pierre Duclos himself, a Dragoon, too, rode to the fight, on an automobile instead of a horse. It was only when he had to carry a message that he walked.

A message. . .

Yes, he had a message, an important message in the turned up cuff of his coat. A message to deliver to the assault cars on the other road, over the hills. But suddenly, he was so very tired and wanted to sleep.

"Eh, Gramp," he called, "I've got a message."

Grandfather stopped. He had heard, this time. And he turned to look at Pierre. Now, under the helmet, the lad saw the face he remembered, the white mustache, the spreading of the nostrils and the wrinkled jowls curving to the pinkish chin.

"Oh, it's you, little one?" He smiled,

and showed his stumpy, blackened teeth. He spat to one side, the way he always did when he smoked. For he was smoking now, the pipe with the carved bowl that represented a Zouave's head. "What did you say? A message?"

"A message from my lieutenant."

"From your lieutenant, eh? Well, that's an important matter. You must get it delivered quickly."

"I am too tired."

The old face grew stern, the mustache bristled.

"Didn't I walk from Germany to France, in my days? Come on—we'll walk together." And he reached a gnarled fist out, gripped Pierre by his wounded shoulder. The pain was intense. "Come on, come on—you'll wince later, my lad. There's the job. You're a Duclos, and we do our job."

Pierre dropped to his knees, and wanted to rest, to sleep. But the old man had become a driving devil, clawed him with those sinewy, pink-blue fingers, pushed him on and on.

"I'm too tired, Grandfather. I must rest."

"You'll rest later, when the job is done. Get up, loafer, good for nothing, devil's brat." The old man was swearing, the way he had sworn at his oxen when the increasing twilight made the earth seem tougher and harder to plow. "Get up and hand in your message. Then you can rest. Get up."

The fingers bit in Pierre's shoulder like steel pincers. And he rose and ran to get away from them. He was a good runner, the regimental champion two years running at six hundred. But Old Duclos kept up with him, limp, wooden shoes, helmet, saber and all.

"You're a soldier, a dragoon. Come on."

"I'm hurt. I must sleep."

"Come on, come on. The message, the message. The assault carts! Loafer, bum, do-nothing, fit-for-naught, Pope's mariner—" The old man was furious if he used that. Pierre had better keep going. "Come on, pick yourself up. Come on—"

The minutes passed. Pierre staggered on. Then his grandfather waved his hands." You're there, Pierre. Straight down the hill. Don't you see them? So long. I'm on my way to Forbach."

"Don't leave me—I can't walk alone."

But the old chap was flitting away, incredibly fast. Pierre reeled after him, shouting. Then his wound hurt again from the pressure of powerful fingers. He turned, and saw Reboul standing at his side. But Reboul had on a leather jacket and the steel helmet with the crash-padding in front. There were other men around, too, in khaki and leather, young, strong men.

"Where's my grandfather?"

"He's nuts," a voice said. Someone was shaking him gently. "Eh, fellow—where you from, eh? What's the matter? What you doing here, eh?"

"Message. My cuff—" Pierre's head cleared somewhat, he made an effort to stand straight, reported: "Dragoon Duclos, Pierre, Reconnoitering Group. Message in my cuff—"

"We got it, old man. It's all right, all right. You'll be fine. Ambulance'll come for you. Lucky stiff, out of it early—for three or four months, anyway. Get that? Three, four months? Eh, watch out! Want to lie down, uh?"

The men eased Pierre to the ground, and he looked up at their staring faces. Hadn't they ever seen a wounded man before? Pierre laughed, tried to explain. He knew that his grandfather was dead, that he had been delirious, but that he had kept going. The rest, he had recomposed from the old fellow's often repeated yarn: It was all there, tough Reboul, the good corporal and the dying lieutenant who made them swear not to surrender. What had started it had been that name, Emersweiler, on the marker!

"What's he saying?" one of the men asked.

"Wait—he's saying, vive l'Empereur!"

They all laughed, and Pierre was angry. He would have liked to explain what he was trying to express. But hands were lifting him gently, placing him on a stretcher. He would roll one way, then the other, toward the Rossel River and the ford.

"Nothing much," a voice was saying. "Just a busted shoulder, and loss of blood. The guy'll be all right, even if his clock is seventy years slow!"

The drooping muzzle pointed at the Iron Duke.

SAILOR BEWARE

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

SINCE it is a common law of human behavior that men who follow any hazardous occupation discount the risks of their calling, no one got steamed up when the *Armbuster* vanished off the South Bank. Two days of heavy fog, with sudden westerly that drove in every troller from Hecate Strait to Tatoosh. The *Armbuster* never got in. The Hakai Pass fleet chalked up another boat and two men gone down to flirt with the mermaids.

Men who live months on end with only an inch or so of wooden plank between their feet and death know that by the law of averages somebody has to get it now and then. Salmon trollers are not a good insurance risk. But that doesn't worry the swivel-necks. They do not like to be called tough guys, but they are. They have to be.

They talked quite casually about the *Armbuster*. Too bad, but then. One or two men observed that it was a trifle odd. The *Armbuster* was a bank troller, built to ice down ten thousand pounds of salmon, to stay offshore a week if necessary. Big little wooden boats like that don't founder in a seaway. Still, on the heaving bosom of the old gray

widow-maker anything can happen.

One week later, the *Sirocco,* last seen ten miles outside Calvert Island, failed to make port. Within three days Johnny Secord, single-handed on the *Malahat,* disappeared into thin air. Every troller between Milbank Sound and Bull Harbor began to sit up and take notice.

"Three bank trollers in ten days an' not a livin' soul knowin' what happened to 'em!" Bill Tollman stormed. "It's too much."

Muzz Cameron shrugged his shoulders. He and Johnny had been close friends.

"They were not haywire outfits," Bill went on. "They were all three high-line boats. They were able, well-powered. There has been no real bad weather anyhow. Just fog. They didn't go ashore, because the coast has been combed for miles. Boats like them don't founder at sea."

"Acts of God an' risks of navigation," Muzz said thoughtfully, "covers a lot of territory. Gas lines leak; engines backfire. You get fires an' explosions. You can hit a submerged log twenty miles offshore an' bust a hole that'll sink you in ten minutes. Lotsa things can lose a boat in these waters."

"Yeah. But not three of the crack boats outa Hakai in ten days," Bill persisted. "It don't add up that way."

"I'm no psychic," Muzz replied. "So it's just more trollers gone the way of all flesh. These things happen. You might get it next—or me."

Bill didn't comment on that. Muzz was sitting on the *Iron Duke's* hatch, his own packet rubbing gunnels with Bill's chunky ship. Bill leaned against his mast, staring about Barney Bay. It was five in the evening. The little cove was full of trollers, their tall poles thrust aloft. Men sat on decks or fixed gear or slept. Boats were still drifting in, unloading salmon on a floating fish camp.

Bill watched a high-bowed banker tied against the scow. One man heaved salmon out of the ice pens below decks. His partner forked them off with a picaroon. They had been digging salmon out of their hold for twenty minutes.

"Them guys on the *Two Brothers* sure click on fish," Bill remarked. "What they got we haven't got?"

"The breaks," Muzz said. "There's thousands of square miles of Pacific Ocean outside Hakai. Easy for one boat to hit a school, an' others miss 'em. Besides, we're gettin' our share."

"They're too consistent for it to be just breaks on findin' salmon," Bill said. "I think I'll tail 'em offshore in the mornin'. How about it?"

"Okay by me," Muzz nodded. "Maybe they got a mystery spoon, or some new trollin' wrinkles."

BILL TOLLMAN kept pondering over those missing boats as the *Iron Duke* parted the morning fog that wrapped the seaward mouth of Hakai.

It seemed incredible that suddenly there were five men he would never see or speak to again. It didn't seem right that in the ordinary course of making a living there should be casualties as swift and ruthless as those of war.

He could hear Muzz plowing off his starboard side, *who-o-o-oof,* unseen but keeping pace. Other faint noises marked trollers driving on their course by compass. Bill ran his fingers through wavy blond hair. His blue eyes stared ahead into those gray swirls, watching the ground swell heave up and pass under him. It was a depressing thought that a man could be alive and whooping one minute and the next be sunk in that heaving green to make a meal for crabs and dogfish. Silly thing to imagine. The *Iron Duke* was strong and able. But so, Bill reflected, were the *Armbuster,* the *Sirocco,* and the *Malahat.* And where were they?

It was not possible to hang on to the *Two Brothers* in that murk. Bill knew about where they had fished the last trip, and he expected to pick her up when the fog cleared, which it usually did any time between ten o'clock and noon. Meantime he and Muzz kept within hail of each other and drove straight out to sea. Due west would take them over a thirty fathom bank in three hours.

They left Barney Point at 3 A. M. At six-o'clock, still in moderate fog, they slowed to a crawl and shot their gear, twenty miles offshore. Not until near eleven did the white shape of Muzz

Cameron's *Loch Lomond* show in the clearing air, half a mile away. At greater distances specks rose and fell on the heave of the sea. Bill slanted over to the *Loch*. Muzz opened and closed his spread fingers twice. Twenty salmon. Bill had about the same. Coho. Fair fishing.

"Let's head out an' see which one of them is the *Two Brothers*," Bill yelled.

They stood off sou'west, still on the great spread of the South Bank, trolling abreast, three hundred yards apart. They passed two other trollers. The third was the *Two Brothers*. Bill and Muzz spread out, flanking the bigger boat. With powerful binoculars they could each mark every move made by the man working in the *Two Brothers* cockpit. They held that position until noon passed. The *Two Brothers* reversed her course. Bill and Muzz did also. Bill saw no high line fishing. The *Two Brothers* pulled even less salmon than he did.

"Maybe it isn't their day," he muttered.

Bill couldn't talk to Muzz Cameron as they lay at anchor that night. The sun went down in a red haze. The black wall of fog that hangs always far offshore in the North Pacific rolled in and over them. Twenty-odd fathoms of water under the keel, seven tons of boat swinging to a sixty-pound mudhook with a hundred fathom scope of manila line. If uneasy lies the head that wears a crown, far more uneasy lies a troller anchored on an offshore bank. Uneasy and lonely. The sea is a place of ominous silences when the voice of the wind is still, doubly so under a veil of fog. When a man lies in his tossing bunk wondering if he rides over the bodies of drowned men he knew, well—Bill Tollman was not subject to nervous fancies. But he kept thinking, wondering.

Bill rose in one of those rare bright dawns that now and then gladdens a bank troller's heart. Smoke streamed from Muzz Cameron's stovepipe, a hundred yards away. Two cables astern the *Two Brothers* lifted and sank in slow, graceful motions. Half a dozen boats lay in sight on the South Bank, and more unseen, since those twenty and thirty fathom depths ran for miles, a high point on the continental shelf that fronts the whole North Pacific coast. Bill ate his breakfast on the afterdeck, glad of that bright morning.

The *Two Brothers* stood away westward. Bill and Muzz ran their spoons right where they pulled anchor and immediately they struck salmon, spring salmon, large hungry fish. A little late for springs, but the spring is an unpredictable wanderer as well as being the aristocrat of table salmon, and there they were. Bill switched his gear to large spring spoons of golden bronze and chortled as each bell clanged a fresh strike. For two hours those spring salmon took the hook savagely. Then they ceased to bite at all. Bill trolled in wide circles, picking up the odd coho. One sweep brought him close aboard the *Loch Lomond*.

"I got about six hundred pounds of spring," Bill yelled. "Doin' any good?"

"About the same, I guess," Muzz answered. "How about gettin' together around eleven an' cookin' some grub?"

The sea had gone flat. It spread like a gray-green, slightly corrugated mirror. Bill and Muzz moved on this smooth surface in a vast emptiness. The skyline was bare of all craft. Every troller visible in the sunrise had steamed far off. Bill and Muzz hoisted poles, lashed them against their masts, lay alongside.

"This is the kinda day makes you glad to be alive," Bill said. "Only I wish we had ice. We gotta run these fish in today."

"Them springs 'll bite again at sundown," Muzz said. "No use both of us leggin' it twenty miles to deliver. Flip a quarter to see which of us goes in."

"Heads I go," Muzz said when Bill spun a coin. It fell clinking on the deck. Tails.

"I'll take 'em to Namu," Bill declared. "I can load enough ice for both of us, so we can stick around out here three-four days. There's *hiyu* salmon around these parts right now."

BILL TOLLMAN blasted his whistle with a curse on the fog. The heat of that one beautiful day had bred a light nor'west breeze and all the fog between

the B. C. coast and Vladivostock had blown in on the South Bank, on all that area. It shrouded the coast so densely that Bill was a full day behind on his run out from Namu. He had to raise the *Loch Lomond* soon or part of Muzz Cameron's catch would spoil. And he couldn't get any answer. The *Iron Duke* and the *Loch Lomond* had shrill vibrophone whistles, tuned to the same note. A blast from either carried two miles. Bill figured he had made a good compass course, and if Muzz was where he ought to be he should answer. But he didn't. Nothing but the ear-piercing note of his own whistle cut that damp vapor.

"Damn!" Bill muttered. He lay with his engine throttled to a whisper, listening. It was like being in a clammy tomb. "No use," he grumbled.

He dropped a sounding-lead, nodded satisfaction. He *had* made good his compass course to the South Bank's peak, the twelve-fathom patch. He was right on it. Late afternoon, heavy fog. Maybe it would clear tomorrow. Bill let his hook run. He stood on deck in that damp hush, feeling small and forlorn. Maybe Muzz, unable to connect with him in that fog, had run for Hakai to deliver. Bill went below finally and cooked his supper.

At daybreak he put on his gear, drifted through the fog, tooting at minute intervals. He took fish steadily, mixed springs and coho. Visibility remained at a hundred yards, a hazy circle surrounded by fog that billowed like smoke. Bill ran short courses, coming back now and then to the twelve-fathom spot. He meant to stick to that known position until it cleared. At eleven in the forenoon he dropped his hook again, to rest awhile and eat. He had taken a lot of salmon. From 3 A. M. until sundown is a long day in the high latitudes. Bill slept for an hour, came on deck to curse the fog again. It was still thick enough to cut with a knife. But the salmon bit, regardless of fog. Bill put his anchor-winch in gear.

The line came reeving in on the nigger-head, easily at first. Then there seemed an uncommon strain. The engine slowed. Finally the chain end came to the winch. Bill stopped it and went forward to cat the anchor.

He stared down over the stemhead in a frozen sort of horror. The stock of his anchor just cleared the sea. One fluke hooked the body of a man. Sightless eyes stared glassy in a white face. Brown hair waved like short, fine seaweed. Bill knew that face, that fine brown hair. He knew the green sweater and Bannockburn trousers. But for a moment it was too incredible, too fantastic, too horrible to be believed. With the bight of a line and tackle from his mast Bill hoisted Johnny Secord's body to his deck. Then he sat down, his hands and knees shaking. Presently he put aside that sick feeling.

Faced by a ghastly reality, Bill checked off the facts.

No gale had overwhelmed the *Malahat* to drown Johnny Secord. He had been shot. The bullet-hole stood blue where the green sweater parted in a V at his throat. Two ten-pound trolling leads had been lashed to his feet. Bill Tollman needed no pictures with that story. All he needed was an answer to the riddle of murder on the high seas. The key to Johnny Secord's passing might fit the lock that shut an unseen door on the *Armbuster* and the *Sirocco*.

"I gotta run," he muttered. "I can't lay out here with that aboard."

As he got under way, the fog swirling above his masthead thinned a little, took on a peculiar bright yellowish glow from sunshine in a cloudless sky. No sign of a break. Just that lighting up. Bill ran half a mile on a compass course for Hakai.

Lying at anchor, with that dead man aboard, he had forgotten his whistle. Now he pulled the cord. Instantly, off south, that blast was answered by another equally shrill, a sustained note with two short toots at the end. Following it a deeper-toned signal.

That was the *Loch's* whistle—the first. Bill felt a strange relief. Blasting at thirty-second intervals, steering by sound, Bill came up on two vessels lying-to, poles lashed up, ghost shapes in that billowing fog. He had to come within a hundred feet before he could clearly distinguish the *Loch Lomond*. Then he saw

that the second vessel was the *Two Brothers*.

The ground swell ran in slow folds. Bill eased alongside the *Loch*. Muzz shivered at sight of Johnny Secord's body. Bill told him how he came by that grim object. As Bill talked, the *Two Brothers* edged near.

Smoky Vashon, at a boat-length, said: "Any luck, kid?"

"Don't know if you'd call it luck," Bill answered. "I hooked a dead man off the bottom. He's been shot an' sunk with trollin' leads to his feet."

The *Two Brothers* pushed alongside and made fast. Three abreast, they rode the swell, wrapped in that fog billowing white like shredded cotton floating in the air. Jack and Smoky Vashon stared at the dead man's waxy face—waxy where it wasn't a dull red. The crabs had been at work.

"Dirty work at the crossroads," Smoky Vashon said calmly. "Somebody sure put on a pirate act. What you goin' to do with him?"

"Run him in to Hakai, I guess," Bill said. "They can send word by a packer to the Provincial police."

"We're goin' to Namu to deliver an' ice up," Smoky Vashon told him. "We could take the corpus. Might be a Provincial patrol boat there. Anyway the cannery's got wireless to call the police."

"Will you?" Bill said. "I just come out. Save me an empty run."

"Sure," Smoky nodded. "The bulls can come out an' look you up if they want to talk about it. They're kind a funny that way."

"I couldn't tell 'em any more'n I've told you," Bill said. "It's just a plain cold-blooded killin'. Maybe the same thing happened to the *Armbuster* an' the *Sirocco*."

"Could be," Smoky agreed. "I don't guess Johnny Secord shot himself, tied twenty pounds of lead to his feet an' jumped overboard."

FOG closed in about the *Two Brothers*. Listening to the diminishing beat of her exhaust, Bill Tollman and Muzz Cameron looked at each other.

"I was gettin' damn nervous about you," Bill said. "Hit any fish?"

"I'll say," Muzz told him. "I'm loaded. "Had to dump a few spoiled ones this mornin'. I'll run into Hakai. I'm glad the *Two Brothers* took that stiff. Dead men, even dead men I know, give me the creeps."

"Me too," Bill nodded. "I'll fork over what fish I got. You try an' get back here to the spot tonight. I got a hold full of ice, but get some more, if you can, at the Hakai camp. There's fish around."

"You bet there's fish," Muzz said. "I'll get back tonight all right. There's seven or eight hours of daylight yet. Reason you couldn't raise me was I went off to the west edge of the bank yesterday with the *Two Brothers*. The fog was so thick I didn't reckon you'd come out, an' they'd located a big school of coho. Gee, we sure did slay them. I must have over three thousand pounds."

Bill had been listening, his head tilted. "Funny how fog sometimes muffles sound," he said. "They ain't been gone two minutes an' you can't hear a thing."

"Yeah, fog's hell on a bank troller," Muzz replied. "Let's have a cup of coffee before I start. She's all hot."

They ate a quick lunch in the *Loch Lomond's* cabin. Bill gave Muzz his slip for the Namu delivery and ninety-odd dollars in currency. Muzz disappeared in the mist. Bill dropped his poles and began to troll. Coho salmon swam in small schools all over the bank. When Muzz rejoined him they would head for that big school on the western edge of the bank. Meantime he would hover around the twelve-fathom patch.

Bill steered east. So long as he ran a good compass course and kept track of his running time, he knew his approximate position.

Sitting in the little cockpit dead aft, watching the magnetic needle let into the deck Bill, heard a slight bump against his planking. He glanced overside to see a short piece of gray-painted board float by. Bill snagged it with his gaff. Ten inches by two, three feet long. The numeral IV carved in the wood.

Bill knew that board. He had sat on it many a time. A loose-fitted coverboard off the *Loch Lomond's* killing-box.

"Musta kicked it over and never noticed," Bill muttered.

Twenty minutes after that the dim outline of a boat loomed so close that Bill had to swing. A deep-sided black hull, her engine exhaust a faint whisper. She was across his bow, and as Bill swung to avoid fouling the lines that trailed astern they moved abreast for a minute, swinging away from each other.

And Bill's heart skipped a beat. He could see the vague outline of a head and shoulders through a pilothouse window. And another man stood half in, half out the wheelhouse doorway. He had a rifle in his hands. He stared at Bill. He didn't speak. He wasn't aiming the gun, but the drooping muzzle pointed at the *Iron Duke*. And then, as the two ships swung, the fog made a curtain between them. Bill Tollman breathed easier. Nothing was said, nothing done, yet some queer, appalling thoughts had flashed across Bill's mind. He had never seen that troller. *Sparrowhawk* in white letters on her black planksheer. Bill couldn't know whether that posture and rifle spelled attack or defence. But he walked forward and took his own carbine off the pins it hung on and brought it back aft. That bird could have potted him like a sitting rabbit. He wouldn't be caught flat-footed like that again.

"Piratical lookin' outfit from the water up," he muttered to himself. "Or am I just gettin' jittery? Blast this fog."

He worked back and forth until near sundown, still in unabated fog. He heaved the lead finally and got sixteen fathoms, gravel. The South Bank bottom was well charted, sand, gravel, clay, shell, rock. Bill knew about where he was. He dropped anchor.

Until darkness and fog combined to cover the sea's face with a black veil, Bill blasted that vibrophone horn at one minute intervals. He got no answer.

"I guess Muzz just couldn't make it in this pea-souper," Bill decided as he turned into his bunk.

THE North Pacific fog is as uncertain as a neurotic woman. Dawn came with a clear sky and bright sun following. But it didn't bring the *Loch Lomond*.

In that bright morning Bill Tollman ceased to feel that something must be amiss. He worked west, grateful for that August warmth after three days in the damp embrace of the fog. Three hours off the twelve-fathom spot he hit—or so he surmised—the big coho school on which the *Two Brothers* and Muzz had made a killing.

Bill's gurdys reeled constantly. As fast as he cleared one line another loaded. He had no time to brood, no thought for anything but the business in hand. A troller only gets fishing like that a few times in any season. The coho came up fighting, silver flashes in the sun as each broke the surface.

He looked up to see the *Two Brothers* steaming slowly, poles spread, a mile south. A troller always comes back to good fishing. But Muzz Cameron hadn't come back. Bill slanted over to hail the Vashon craft.

"The bull patrol was in Namu," Smoky Vashon yelled. "Wants to talk to you. I told 'em you'd be in Hakai or Namu in a day or two. How's fishin'? They say they're biting plenty."

"Tops," Bill answered, still a little worried. "See anything of the *Loch Lomond* on your way out?"

"No," Vashon called across. "But we run out here before daylight. Looks like lots of coho around. Say, how does your glass read?"

"Low. Fallin' fast," Bill replied. "She's goin' to blow."

"Yeah. If it ain't fog it's wind," Smoky complained. "Well, we'll kill 'em while we can."

"Hey," Bill shouted on impulse. "You know a packet called the *Sparrowhawk*? Black hull. Two man outfit."

"I'll say," Smoky Vashon yelled back. "They're from North Island. See 'em around here?"

"Yesterday," Bill told him. "On the bank."

"Bad eggs, them two," Smoky bawled across the widening space.

Bad eggs, eh? They looked it, Bill thought. Still, you couldn't always judge an egg by its shell.

In that bright atmosphere Bill could see specks near and far on the sea—trollers, rising and falling in a ground

swell that imperceptibly lumped higher as the day waned. Wind, a big wind, far off. The heat that bred fog also bred westerly winds.

But it was as yet a perfect day. Bill could see the loom of a high peak on Calvert Island, purple on the skyline behind Hakai Pass. He stood in the cockpit, stripped to undershirt and overalls. The salmon were still biting.

The aneroid needle stood at 29.30 when Bill dropped his hook in twenty-five fathoms. He hadn't stopped all day. He had pulled, dressed and iced down a hundred and forty coho since sunrise. He looked at that low glass and was tempted to run. It was wisest to run. And then he shrugged his shoulders. Might be just rain. He disregarded the stray puffs of cool wind that fluttered across the darkening sea. It was a fair wind for Hakai if it did blow. Bill was very tired, very sleepy.

He could see the riding-lights of the *Two Brothers* and three other boats anchored up within a radius of a mile.

"Let 'er blow," Bill muttered as he turned in.

IT DID blow. Before daylight the plunge and roll of the *Iron Duke* kept shifting Bill in his bunk. The wind rose in screeches through wire stays, taut cordage. Once or twice Bill felt the hook slip on gravel bottom as a big one creamed along the *Iron Duke's* bows, shoving her backward. But he stayed in the flea-pit till dawn, and when he peered out the wheelhouse door in daylight Bill made a face at the sea.

Wind whooped out of the west, a bit northerly. The big ones had little curling white crests. A troller couldn't handle gear in that slop. Bill pulled his anchor and ran. Everything else had vanished off the bank. He plowed for three hours before he sighted any craft, and then only a lone troller streaking in past the South Pointers, headed like himself for the sheltered cove behind Barney Point. When their converging courses brought them near, Bill saw that it was the black-hulled troller, the *Sparrowhawk*.

Bill slowed down in the narrow entrance, laid the *Iron Duke* alongside the fish-camp. Before he touched a hatch-cover Bill said to the buyer: "*Loch Lomond* deliver here night before last, or yesterday?"

The man shook his head.

"Oh," Bill said. The *Sparrowhawk* was easing in the other side of the scow. Bill took a long look around the cove. He spotted the *Iron Duke II*, manned by a wild Irishman and the little wizened Duke of Belize, who had given Bill Tollman his start as a troller as well as the little ship Bill helmed. The *West Wind* also. Two of Bill's crowd who had been farther north. But no sight of the *Loch Lomond* among the forty-odd trollers in that bight.

Bill forked off his catch. When he backed away from the scow he wheeled out into the Pass. Eight miles to Namu. He made it in an hour.

"No," the cannery bookkeeper said. "Cameron hasn't been here. You made the last delivery for both of you."

Flat and final. Muzz Cameron had to deliver one place or the other. Bill went out and sat on a pile-head of the cannery wharf. Gulls wheeled overhead, filled the air with white pinions and harsh crying. The cannery line rumbled. Steam hissed. Voices droned. The west wind ruffled Bill's fair hair. But Bill Tollman didn't see or hear. He sat staring at the wharf planks.

Another hour's run brought him alongside the *Iron Duke II* and the *West Wind*, outside boats in a row of seven swinging to two anchors. The *Two Brothers* lay in the middle. Aside from Bill every packet in that row was a two-man bank troller. Bill Tollman knew them all. Sometimes that bunch fished the same area as a fleet, scouting fish and telling each other, tying up together. High-line trollers. Going hounds.

When Bill told them Muzz Cameron had come up missing in calm, foggy weather they looked sober. It was the fourth boat in three weeks off the South Bank. Bill looked at the black *Sparrowhawk* swinging alone on her anchor not far off. But he didn't say anything.

Bill remembered that he was hungry. He rowed over to the fish scow. It had a store at one end. While he was talking to the buyer, the P. M. VI slid in.

"She's whoopin'," the constable-skipper told Bill. "We got a rough ride from Spider Island."

"You didn't notice the *Loch Lomond* at the Spider Island camp?" Bill asked sharply.

The officer shook his head. Bill couldn't tell them much about either Muzz or his hooking up Johnny Secord's body. But he recounted the facts tersely. The two Provincial men frowned.

"It looks to me," Bill said bluntly, "as if somebody is doin' a foxy job of hijackin'. Every one of them guys would have from a couple of hundred to a thousand dollars in cash on him, besides a load of salmon."

The policeman nodded. He looked intently at Bill.

"Would you be havin' any ideas about that—or who?" he asked.

"No," Bill said. "I wouldn't have nothin' but the wildest kinda guess. You know anythin' about that black troller, the *Sparrowhawk?*"

"No," the constable said. "But we'll find out. There's no evidence of anything but that one man has positively been murdered. That's enough for us to hang around in this area with our eyes open."

"That's your business," Bill nodded. "One thing sure—them four boats did not founder. They weren't wrecked. It's my notion all of 'em went the way Johnny Secord did."

"It sort of adds up to that," the Provincial officer said. "Better keep your rifle handy, Tollman, when a strange packet eases up to you in the fog."

"You're tellin' *me,*" Bill said somberly.

THE police boat slid out to anchor. Trollers hailed Bill as he rowed back. Everybody in Barney Bay knew now that another boat was posted missing. Bill got aboard his own ship. He sat brooding in the *Iron Duke's* cabin until Perry Connor stuck his red head in and told him the coffee pot was on in the *Iron Duke II.* Live men, Perry said, had to eat, no matter who died. Bill found other trollers sipping coffee aboard the Connor-Duke of Belize ship.

Later somebody said a poker game was running on the *West Wind* and Bill went over the joined rubstrakes to have a look-see. Johnny Van Tromp, Gabe Maguire, Dave Vose and two West Coast men surrounded a table in the *West Wind's* cabin. Like the *Iron Duke II,* she was beamy and deep. That ample space was filled with men and cigarette smoke and profanity. The gale gave them a rest, an enforced rest.

Bill Tollman sat on a bunk to watch the play. After awhile Dave Vose took a bump in a big pot and dropped out.

Bill took the vacated place. It was a tough game. Johnny Van Tromp, all four of them, in fact, were ready money trollers and they didn't play a piker's game. Bill had to concentrate on his play. It helped him forget about Muzz Cameron. He didn't notice that Jack Vashon had come in until one of the West Coast men decided to quit. Then Vashon took his chair. Once a tidal swirl through the cove swung the line of boats, and through a porthole Bill saw the black *Sparrowhawk,* riding like a lone bird, two men sitting on her back deck.

"Anybody know that black packet?" Bill asked.

"Yeah," a Kyuquot man said. His tone had a tinge of scorn. "Herrin' chokers from North Island."

"They get the fish, though," another remarked. "Their business if they'd rather sling bait than brass."

Like a fly fisherman speaking of an angler who used worms for trout.

There were no chips in that poker game. There was a lot of loose silver and a good many five and ten dollar bills. The play ran on. Fishermen wandered in and out. The hum of talk in that cabin was a steady drone. Heavy puffs from the westerly slewed the boats, blasted through the *West Wind's* open ports. Wisecracks and tall stories. A poker game for blood. A troller's Saturday night in the middle of the week.

Bill opened a jackpot. Gabe Maguire raised before the draw. Bill stood the raise. So did Jack Vashon. Vashon had lost steadily. As he called for his cards on the draw he pulled some bills out of a pocket and spread them in front of him. Bill Tollman didn't help his two pair. He passed. Gabe Maguire bet two dol-

lars. Vashon tilted it three. Bill folded. Gabe called the raise and back-raised twenty dollars.

Talk stopped while Vashon studied his hand. Necks craned to see if he would call or raise again. Vashon's fingers twiddled a bill, held it hesitatingly over the pot for a few seconds. Then he dropped it in.

"I call," he said.

BILL TOLLMAN'S fingers clamped on that twenty-dollar bill. He stood up, a canvas camp-stool clattering to the floor. His tanned young face had gone strangely white.

"Vashon, where did you get this twenty-dollar bill?" he said tightly.

"Huh? Why—" Vashon looked startled. "Off a fish buyer, I guess. Why?"

Bill Tollman's voice sank to a hoarse whisper. "You took it off Muzz Cameron. An' you couldn't take money off Muzz unless you killed him first."

He struck Vashon across the table, a straight-arm punch that split Vashon's lower lip and rocked his head back.

Feet clattered on the *West Wind's* companion steps. Bill Tollman glanced over his shoulder to see both Provincial constables. Their friendly grins changed to surprised inquiry at sight of the blood running down Vashon's chin, and the look on Bill Tollman's face.

"Take him," Bill pointed at Vashon. "There's the South Bank killer. Better get his brother, too."

"The guy's gone nuts!" Jack Vashon protested.

"You got evidence, Tollman?" the chief constable asked.

"I have," Bill answered coldly. "Right here in my hands. A twenty-dollar bill he took outa his pocket to put in this pot. That's money Muzz Cameron had on him day before yesterday when he left me in the fog. I can swear to it on a stack of Bibles. Lissen, policeman, an' you trollers. Day before yesterday the *Loch Lomond*, the *Two Brothers* an' myself was all together on the bank in the fog. I'd picked up Johnny Secord's body. *Two Brothers* offered to take it to Namu. Muzz left for Hakai ten minutes after they started. I went on trollin'. I can guess the *Two Brothers* laid alongside him in the fog an' cleaned up on him, because standin' along on the same course both boats took, I picked up one of Muzz's hatch boards. I've got it in my hold now. The *Loch Lomond* vanished. This guy throws a twenty-dollar bill into this jackpot—a twenty-dollar bill I gave Muzz Cameron five minutes before he left me in that fog."

"How can you identify and swear to this particular bill?" the officer asked.

Jack Vashon stood against a thwartships bulkhead. Johnny Van Tromp on one side of him, Gabe Maguire on the other. Gabe's dark face went black with suspicion and anger. Vashon's face was the color of putty.

"Bend over here," Bill Tollman said. "I don't want *him* to hear."

The Provincial man leaned. Bill whispered in his ear. The constable nodded.

"One of you fellows," he said over his shoulder, "tell Smoky Vashon to come in here. Summers, search this bird for more money."

The second constable was going through Jack Vashon when Smoky came down the steps.

"What the hell's this?" he demanded.

"You are under arrest on a charge of murder and robbery," the constable said crisply. "And I must warn you that anything you say may be used against you."

Smoky Vashon lunged, reaching under his left arm. But the constable's hands and the hands of two trollers clamped on him. They took a flat automatic pistol from a holster under his arm-pit. From around his middle, under his shirt they stripped a home-made money-belt of cotton fabric. Some loose change and currency from his pockets. The other constable had done a like service for Jack Vashon. The chief constable shook thin packets of bank bills out of both belts on the table. He went methodically over the lot. Here and there he picked out a bill, until he had five in addition to the one Bill Tollman still held in his hand. The constable took that one too.

"It checks and double-checks, Tollman," he said finally. "It's a cinch."

Jack Vashon struggled between Johnny Van Tromp and Gabe Maguire.

"I told you to leave Muzz Cameron alone," he screamed at his brother. "I told you they'd get wise. I told—"

"Shut up, you sap!" Smoky Vashon snarled.

But Jack Vashon wouldn't shut up. He couldn't. Hysterical words, disjointed sentences flowed out of him in a stream —and the men crowding the *West Wind's* cabin, peering in from her after deck stood in silence while he raved on.

The Provincial officer in charge stood jotting down notes in a little black book.

"That's enough," he said at last, a little wearily. "You've said enough to hang both of you a dozen times."

They herded the Vashons across into the gray police cruiser tied beside the *Iron Duke.* They backed the *Two Brothers* out from her place in that row of trollers. And the Police patrol steamed out of Barney Bay with two prisoners in irons and the *Two Brothers* in tow.

"HOW in blazes did you know, as soon as you seen that twenty, that it was took off Muzz Cameron?" Perry Connor wanted to know.

Bill Tollman sat staring at the floor.

"Layin' at the Namu wharf waitin' for that fog to thin," Bill said tonelessly, "I started to write a letter. Muzz's fish-slip an' his money lay on the table. Three twenty-dollar bills, three tens, brand new Bank of Canada bills. There's a picture of the king on them bills. He's a kinda sober-lookin' guy, George the Sixth. I dunno why, just kinda absent-minded, I inked a dinky little mustache on his smooth face. It looked kinda tricky. It sort of amused me. So I did all six bills. You wouldn't notice unless you looked close—unless you knew what to look for. Muzz looked at 'em an' stuck the money in his pocket. He didn't notice. But it stuck out like a sore thumb, when I looked at that twenty droppin' from Vashon's fingers.

"Marked money, see? Marked without any intention. Just because I happened to be foolin' with a pen. When Vashon put that bill in the pot—well, there was all the answers."

"They'll hang," Gabe Maguire said darkly, "But that won't do Johnny Secord an' Muzz Cameron any good. Nor the boys on the *Armbuster* an' the *Sirocco.*"

"No," Bill agreed, "but it'll let the rest of us sleep sounder when we're anchored somewhere in the fog."

"An' that," Johnny Van Tromp said dryly, "would almost prove there's somethin' in that old wheeze about the pen bein' mightier than the sword. Or does it?"

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By F. R. BUCKLEY

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To his lordship the Count Roberto II of Montalvo; from Luigi Caradosso at his farm, these;

My lord;

It is probably as your lordship says, and indeed my former letter was written with the prayer that it might not convert your excellency from his opinion previously formed. It is an irony of Fate—perhaps devised to keep us from a second eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge—that the older and wiser a man grows, and the more capable of giving advice, the less willing is he to besmirch his last years with the consequences of giving it.

Witness myself, graciously consulted by your highness in this matter of the da Petri marriage. I have lived long enough, and in different places enow, to have a vast experience of marriage. Then as to the alternative of the alliance, war—I was in active service when war was war, as distinct from the peckings and flutterings so-called today. And regard-

ing the question on which both others depend—I mean the question of your lordship's best way to gain possession of the Valley of Pontresina—I have seen enough of polity, in the capacity of guard-captain, to have formed opinions based on the facts of a case, rather than on the fancies preferred by your excellency.

Yet behold! Save for the circumstance that your grace once saved my life—and from hanging, too, which hath always dismayed me—wild horses could not have drawn from me the counsel I gave, namely, that of a sword and a marriage-contract, considering each as a weapon of offense, I should prefer the sword, as being less likely to double on itself and assassinate its user.

And now that my opinions are refuted, what do I do? I wish your highness all success and a vigorous posterity; I thank God for your lordship's invincible ignorance; and in token of my gratitude propose the telling of a short tale, such as your excellency used to beg for in the guardroom, while yet moist about the nose.

I only beg that it may be taken as a tale, and not (like the works of certain lewd fellows I have known, whose only object was to amuse and who would have shuddered at the idea of moral instruction) be received as a parable.

Well, I was captain—not guard-captain, but captain of the forces, such as they were—to one Girolamo Bergami, a noble holding certain lands to the northeast of Rometia, which have long since passed into the hands of the Florentines. To the north of him again lay the lands of that most grasping of old gentlemen, my Lord Duke of Cartesi; and to the south was the county ruled by Beniamino di Fontanelli—a young man, to be sure, but of a covetousness that would have done discredit to twice his years.

Naturally, both duke and count desired Girolamo's lands—which, so long as each wanted the whole county, was well enough. Neither dare take action, because of the other. But in the autumn after I had ceased to be lieutenant to Simone de' Neri (God rest his soul, Amen!) Girolamo had by chance arrested a messenger between his neighbors; who, questioned in the usual manner, told how that Cartesi and the lord Beniamino had come to an agreement. The spring following, both were to fall upon Girolamo; one from the north and one from the south; each taking, after the victory, the half of the conquered lands lying next to his own borders—"according" said the letter "to that spirit of Christian love and justice which should always prevail between princes."

Wherefore—according to that spirit of unchristian distrust which always doth prevail between princes, their letters to the contrary notwithstanding—Girolamo had sought me out, and given orders to raise and train an army during the winter.

"But," I said, when he had explained matters to me, "you ask the impossible, my lord."

"Impossible?" barks the old man. "Impossible to raise and train an army in six months?"

He had bushy eyebrows and a habit of champing angrily with his mouth. I might add he did *not* understand matters military.

"When using the word 'train', my lord," says I therefore, "it is well to understand clearly what is to be implied thereby. If your grace wishes to ask whether I can, in six months, train a few hundred plowmen not to stab themselves with their own pikes, the answer is aye. If on the other hand, he means, can I teach them to fight the combined armies of Cartesi and Fontanelli, the same being veteran soldiers in possession of cannon, the answer is nay. Nay."

His daughter was in the room with us. A negligible girl in mouse color, wearing —the first and only time ever I saw such things upon a woman—a pair of spectacles to assist her sight.

"It is related of such-and-such a Carthaginian general," says she (she gave his name, but of course I have forgotten it) "that, being assailed by four picked Roman legions under such-and-such a commander, he in six weeks trained five thousand citizens to such a point of military excellence that they overcame easily the forces sent against them. This was in such-and-such a year before the birth of Our Lord. Ahem!"

A lie, of course; but how could I say so when her father was looking at her with such pride? There was at that time a fashion among the nobility to stuff its children with learning. I remembered to have heard that even his Grace of Cartesi had followed this style to the extent of sending his son Pietro to Padua, whence he had returned able to speak Greek and Latin better than Italian.

"Perhaps your ladyship would like to engage a Carthaginian captain for the present business," says I, saluting. "As for myself—"

Old Girolamo returned from admiration to business.

"Look you, Caradosso," says he, champing, "I do not demand a force of veterans. Nor do I expect to fight. Here is the matter. Old Giuseppi di Cartesi is not well; he hath a cough that should carry him off this winter, or the devil is in it. Therefore the spring campaign will be entrusted to his son, who is book-learned, and therefore a fool."

At this I glanced at the lady, but she appeared either not to have heard, or to have failed to take this saying to herself. She was staring at me through the aforesaid spectacles, and she continued to do so through all the rest of the interview. The glasses magnified her eyes to such a pitch that she looked like a frog; but there was that in them nevertheless that warned me even then that she, perhaps alone among the learned, was at least no fool.

"WHEREFORE," says Girolamo, "here is what I propose —to drill our levies publicly and with much parade, so that young Pietro, coming to carry out his father's dying orders to murther us in the spring, may conceive himself confronted by forces his father wist not of. Being no soldier, he will think troops are troops, ours as good as his. Being new to the throne, he will distrust advisers who tell him otherwise, and will tend to that course which shall keep the realm most certainly safe. *Videlicit,* inaction. He will therefore renounce the agreement with Beniamino di Fontanelli, who, seeing himself thus abandoned, will—"

And so he went on. My lord, I stood before him paralyzed at the intricacies of that old man's mind. Having conceived the plan which I have detailed above, he had furthermore foreseen its consequences unto the third and fourth generation; at the end of which period, so far as I remember, his great-great-grandson was to be doge of Venice and all his posterity dukes at the least. There were, of course—as my sober senses at first told me—a million things that might go wrong with the plan at any point; *imprimis,* old Giuseppe di Cartesi might not die; or his son might take advice and so destroy us; but Girolamo so utterly failed to see these things, much less consider them, that after some time they began to fade also from my sight. After the old man had champed and waved his eyebrows at me for half an hour (his daughter meantime staring at me ever through her spectacles) I was as one enchanted; certain, if such a thing can be believed, that what he said not only could, but must by nature come to pass.

I recovered later, of course; but by that time I had taken charge of the forces and could not well withdraw. And then, just as the hopelessness of my task was dawning upon me and leading me to thoughts of incontinent desertion, Girolamo's dreams began to come true in the most amazing manner. Giuseppe di Cartesi did indeed die; Pietro, by abolishing two taxes within a week of his accession, for some reason connected with the ancient Greeks, proved himself to be indeed a fool; and within a month, our spies had brought us news that he was verily alarmed by our rabble of turnip-growers. He had indeed sent messengers to Beniamino di Fontanelli, pointing out how conditions had changed, and suggesting the abandonment of the treaty without delay.

It was here that all failed to go according to expectation. Another spy brought us news that instead of accusing Pietro of treachery and denouncing him, Beniamino had returned a loving message, agreeing that it might not be well to attack us at that time, and suggesting that, instead, he and Pietro should join in the annexation of the Tyranny of Vercelli, which stood between their ter-

ritories to our west. Meseemed that this was good news for us; but Girolamo, summoning me to his cabinet as soon as the message was received, thought otherwise.

"Idiot!" he shouted, champing until he foamed. "Vercelli belongs to my aunt!"

And he explained to me, as I will not to your lordship, who hath no doubt already his belly-full of politics, just in what manner this threat to his aged relative—whom, by the way, he did most heartily hate—was a worse menace to his peace of mind than the proposed attack on his own dominions.

Vercelli, though small in itself, was as it were a key to larger lands, held either by relatives of Girolamo, or by friends of theirs who would be much disobliged if Vercelli were let to fall into the hands of such a grasper as Beniamino. For that, ensconced in this tyranny, he would be in the very midst of what such as he most chiefly crave—fat lands, weakly held. He would be able to gobble county after county as far as Rometia.

"It seems strange, if the prospect is so tempting," says I, "that the conquest hath not been tried before."

"Old Fontanelli was a friend of my late uncle," says Girolamo, biting his nails. "And the place is strong enough to stand out against any one army. How could I foresee that his son would be a graceless, ungrateful young dog with no respect for age? Or that he would make this alliance with Cartesi? Yet the family will lay all the blame to me. What am I to do?"

I suggested the obvious—that, since he had neglected to strengthen Vercelli while there was yet time, he had best try to repair the damage now it was too late. In short, he should try, by joining his forces to those of his aunt, to offset the juncture of the Cartesi and Fontanelli forces.

"Fool!" shouts the old man. "Dost think me an idiot like thyself? Have I not told thee these troops are but for show? Dost not know that at sight of a real battle they would run like rabbits? My aunt's captain would throw up his command at the sight of such a mob. What could they do but get in his way? Besides, I owe money to the Florentines, on the set condition that I shall fight no wars except to save the country from invasion. What to do? What to do?"

I ASKED how long a time we had to think of the matter.

"None," champs the old man. "The troops from Cartesi are already under arms. The day after tomorrow young Pietro crosses this territory—crosses my land!—to make the last agreements with that accursed Fontanelli. And thereafter—"

"Is he to visit your lordship?" asks the lady Maria; who was at this interview as at most others, resting her chin on her hand and peering through those windows of hers.

"Aye. He doth not know that I am 'ware of what is toward. How shall I eat with him and not choke?"

"It could be managed," says the young lady thoughtfully, "that *he* might choke. Ahem!"

Her father stared at her.

"That he might—"

"Be poisoned," says the damsel calmly. "Such things have been done. It is related of Alexander the—"

Of course, poison was no new idea to me, but this was the first time ever I had heard it spoken of from behind spectacles. The novelty was unpleasant to Girolamo also—largely because he had already had some such idea, and found it impossible of execution. I forget why—some political reason. Never did I know a man so hedged about with politics. He made my head swim. Apparently his own ached; for, having refused the gentle counsel of his daughter, he sat down and held his skull in both hands.

"What to do?" says he, over and over again. "What to do?"

"By your leave, father," says Maria, somewhat chilly for the reception of her former plan, "meseems the problem is simple enow. The Duke of Cartesi must be prevented from making junction with Messire di Fontanelli."

"Prevented! Ha!"

"This prevention could be accomplished by poi—"

"Have I not told thee nay?"

"—or by other means."

"What other means, in God's name?"

"That," says the young lady, rising with dignity, "I shall make the subject of my studies this evening. Captain, you will open the door."

So she went, and until after midnight old Girolamo and myself and his secretary of state and a councillor or so racked our brains for the solution of this problem so simply stated by Maria—namely, for a means whereby, without violence, young Pietro di Cartesi should be dissuaded from this juncture with Beniamino di Fontanelli, to which, had he the brains of an infant, he must surely see his own advantage committed him more than did even his father's treaty.

"Money?" asked one of the councillors.

"He hath more than I," growls Girolamo. "God's body, I have reports on the brat. Spends nothing, save on books."

"Women?" asks the secretary of state. "It comes to my mind, my lord, that there is living quite near here at this time, a—"

"No, I tell ye. He cares for nothing but learning—books, parchments, all that rubbish. 'A wouldn't look at a woman unless she spoke Greek—"

He paused dead in his discourse and stared about the table, we on our sides, staring similarly at him. The same idea had struck us all at the same time.

"Caradosso," says Girolamo, in a tone of reverence for his own wit, "is there a sentry at the door?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Despatch him forthwith," says my lord, still in the same low voice, "to fetch my chaplain here on the instant. Master secretary, pens, ink, parchment, and sand immediately here. By God's hooks, I believe I have found the way."

A WAY which—it involved simply the meeting of the learned duke by the learned countess, and the reading by her of a learned discourse in Latin—may not seem very marvelous to your lordship, who, however, hath not had his appetite for ways and means sharpened by five hours' failure to find any trace of the same. Nor, under favor, can a youngster of your grace's age form any idea of the respect (a fad which I have remarked on heretofore) in which learning was held at that time.

The craze for Arab horses at this present day is somewhat to the point; your grace, being afflicted by it, knows something of the brotherhood existing between breeders. It was then the same with Latin and Greek. Nobles who would not lift a hand to gain a kingdom, and who regarded their own children as their inferiors in blood, would travel a hundred miles and embrace the son of a blacksmith, if he had some new learning in the classics. So that the idea of Girolamo had more virtue than one might think; and we sat there uncomplaining until six in the morning; when the friar had finished a Latin speech such as sure was never heard before in the world.

He read it over to us, such parts as he thought we might understand—translating it, of course, and leaving out the various quotations from the Greek and Hebrew. Its matter was simple enough—a statement of our political position; a recital of the advantages which would accrue from an alliance with us, and a statement (quite untrue) of the damages which should come to all, if the juncture with Fontanelli took place; nay, it was the manner that roused admiration.

After every sentence of argument, there followed five or six verses from ancient writers, magnificently bespattered with "ums" and "ibuses", and referring to almost everything under the canopy of heaven, from the shape of a Roman senator's nose, to the condition of agriculture in ancient Hellas.

I could make no sense of it at all. It was magnificent. I was woundy surprised, at the further council holden next afternoon to see the Lady Maria treat the document so off-hand, the more so since her nocturnal thinking had led her, or so it seemed to me, to the conception of our very own plan.

"It had seemed to me, father," says she, peering through her windows at the manuscript, and thrusting it carelessly into her sleeve, "that it would be better if I met the duke on his arrival—"

"Aye, but—" says Girolamo, gesturing toward the document (it contained one

argument all his own, and he felt for it as a mother for her child).

"—wherefore," says Maria impatiently, disregarding the gesture, "it will be necessary for thee to take to thy bed."

"Bed? O aye. To explain why I send thee. Ha!"

"Aye. And at once, if the pretence is to be believed. The duke is expected at Velletri tomorrow, and it will not do to be taken ill on that very day."

"Can I not rather—" began the old man, for the weather was hot.

"Nay," says the girl. "Others can hire spies beside ourselves. It will be well, when your lordship is bedded, moreover, to keep the council in attendance, as though the illness were full grave."

"But—" says the council, not wishing, any more than Girolamo, to be mewed up in a bedchamber in such weather; which protest was quite in vain. The Lady Maria had them in charge, and she disposed of them as a general might dispose of corporals.

Whereafter we were left alone together, and she issued her orders concerning the escort. Very exact proper orders they were, too, showing a knowledge greater than Girolamo's own, of what the troops available could do, and how they should do it. Whereby my astonishment was greatly increased, when she ended by asking if the old horse-litter was still in service.

"I—it—that is to say—" I began, wondering what the devil she could want with that relic. Horse-litters at that time were utterly out of fashion, though they have since returned. Mules were the style, and many ladies even rode horseback, especially those with pretty feet. Of these latter the Lady Maria was one, despite her lack of any such adornments. She rode like an Amazon.

"It is in the base of the north tower," says she impatiently, while I thus speculated, "and when last I saw it, was in good repair. If it is not so now, have the work done upon it before tomorrow. Since the mules have been sold, dismount four soldiers from white horses. That will make sixty-four men of the old guard left at the castle, which is enough, considering that we have two hundred of the levies fit to parade outside the walls. Is all that understood?"

"Aye, my lady."

"Dismissed, then," says the girl, rising and peering at me. "We start for Velletri at dawn tomorrow."

WELL, there was a difficulty about that litter, which, since my lord Girolamo was invisible, I took to the Lady Maria, who proved to be invisible also. Down in the courtyard, two of her maids were drawing water out of the siege-well, which generally was not used because of its great depth and the labor of pulling up the bucket; another, coming to the door of Maria's apartments with her hands all covered with grease, said that she would take my message to the lady; and a fourth, brandishing a lead comb, required me after some minutes to obey orders and bother her ladyship no more.

I was puzzled. God wot I knew the uses of grease and lead combs; aye, and of ice-cold water, and eke of the perfumes whose stench pervaded the corridors for yards; but what this present lady was to do with such vanities, I could not clearly imagine. And had I had the ability, I should not have had the time; for it was only by the hardest work that I managed to appear in the courtyard at the appointed hour, with that accursed litter in good order, and the escort properly dressed. And when I had performed the feat, I nearly spoiled the spectacle at the last moment by falling off my horse.

The cause was amazement.

My lord, I doubt whether I have so far given your grace a just picture of the lady Maria; perhaps I have relied too much on her spectacles. Be it said in addition that she was utterly careless of her dress and the arrangement of her hair; and that, when interrupted at her writing, she had a habit of sticking her pen behind her ear, like a clerk; quite indifferent to the smudging of the ink on her temple. Likewise, when embarrassed by clogs in the said ink, she thought nothing of wiping her pen on her gown, which was usually of grey color and strong, ugly material. I have shown that she talked, thought, and even acted like a man, if a scholarly one; which I

knew she was not, of course; but at the same time it had aye been impossible to regard her as a woman. Judge of my surprise to see her now mincing to the litter in a gold and scarlet robe whereof the train—trains were as much out of fashion as litters—was held up by two maids!

"Captain," says Maria in a voice I scarce recognized. Aye, and where were her spectacles, on which Girolamo had much relied to bolster the effect of the Latin oration? "O Captain!"

"Your ladyship!" says I, sword-saluting so clumsily that I almost cut off my ear.

"Your hand to the litter," says she reproachfully. "The step is so high."

Well, I dismounted with my knees knocking together, and took her hand, and assisted her over a threshold perhaps six inches high—staring at her the while, I can well think, like a man who sees visions. Seating herself, she glanced at me; and, seeing my astonishment, smiled to herself. I noted, at the same time, that her sleeves were slit in the fashion of twenty years ago, and that she carried no purse.

"Well, Captain?" she said, as I saluted again.

"Under favor," says I, "has your ladyship forgotten the oration?"

"I never learned it," says she. "I have no head for such things."

At this she gave a laugh, something in her usual manner, which resembled the barking of a small dog.

"Let us be going, good man," says she, who had never called me save by my name, and that gruffly. "The heat of the day will be upon us soon, and I cannot bear it, indeed."

Seeing me stand there like a stock, she ceased smiling.

"Get a-horse, Caradosso," she said, in her own manner. "I am *not* mad."

WHICH assurance was of little comfort to me as we rode through the countryside that long forenoon. It was a hot day, but I sweated more than there was need. Granted she was not mad, what idiot plan was this? I remembered the reports of the spies concerning yon duke of Cartesi—how he was a mild stripling of absent mind, who cared nothing for women and less for wealth, and whose only weakness was the classics.

Launched by the brains of her father and his council on this sure road to the young man's respect, equipped with an oration that would have stunned a doctor of laws, the girl was abandoning this strength—for what? For an attempt to seduce his grace by means ancient and well known in the time of this Alexander of whom she prated. Even had the youth been of amatory disposition, she was scarce the woman to strike him. I groaned aloud, just at which instant there issued from the litter the sound of Maria's gruff laugh.

A moment's silence, and she laughed again; and, after a pause, did it for the third time.

"Ha-ha-ha!" says her ladyship carefully; and then, to a different tune, "Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

I rode up to the side of the litter.

"Doth your ladyship feel the heat?" I asked, whereat she regarded me with disgust. She was sitting, at the moment of my arrival, with her chin on her hand and her feet drawn up as it were under her, so that she half reclined; and in the other hand, she held a mirror wherein she regarded her reflection. It was not, I must confess, entirely unpleasing.

"No, fool," says her ladyship. "Begone! And keep the men away from the litter."

Aye, she was practising her laugh as a man might pink with his sword at a door, trying to make it more silvery, as it were, without too much craning of her neck. All the way to Velletri, as we plodded along the white roads under that baking sun, I could hear her at it, varying the gamut from time to time, and by the sound trying various positions of the mouth, like a singer. She had it perfect by the time we reached Velletri. And she lost no time in exhibiting it to that most grave and serious of young men, my lord Duke.

"Is the Ser Pietro there?" says she from behind her curtains, when as the two escorts had saluted, and I had kissed his highness' hand. "Then beg him to come to the litter. He-ha-ha-he!"

Certes, I thought, she could not have

examined our visitor—though with my own eyes I had observed her doing so, through a peep-hole contrived in the front of her chair; for he was no young man, meseemed, to giggle at.

He did not, to be sure, wear spectacles, but his eyes had so to say an inward-looking aspect which made his appearance beyond example grave. For the rest, he was large-boned and sufficiently well built; rather pale in the face; slow-moving; and—as I saw when he kissed the lady's hands, taking one after another instead of both together—of old-fashioned manners.

"I beg your grace not to look at me," says Maria—which of course he did forthwith, though theretofore little inclined to do so—"for I am melted by the weather. I trust that your lordship is in good health?"

The young man considered for some time, and said "Er." The question seemed to recall him from far places of the mind.

"But I need scarce ask," says Maria, with another giggle, "since I have the pleasure of seeing your highness' complexion. Alas, that we women sigh in vain for what is wasted on rough men!"

I will swear my stomach turned over; I stared at my lord of Cartesi with horror. If I were repelled by such gross flattery, not even addressed to me, what would he think, its object and steeped in the wisdom of a thousand generations? I will astonish your lordship. Seeming to return still more effectively from his abstraction, the duke smiled.

"My father would have come to meet your grace, but for an illness," says Maria, before he could go farther. "But since he is laid by, the duty hath developed on me, a poor welcomer for such a noble, and woefully ignorant of the politics with which you men engage yourselves. *Adime!* Of what use are we women?"

"Er—" says Pietro, and concluded with a string of Latin. From where I stood, I could see Maria consider whether to disclaim all knowledge of the tongue, or to vary her performance with scholarship. Deciding for the latter, she giggled again and smote his highness on the wrist with her fan.

"We must be going," says she. "Captain, give order. My lord, if I were not afraid of your compliments, insincere as they are, I would ask you to ride by my litter. It is not often, alas! that one finds graces of both—"

So I hurried away, and, my lord Pietro being engaged, gave the marching order to his captain, a fellow I did not know, but who remembered me from the circumstance that I had broken his nose in a tavern at Rometia. He snuffled, but bore no malice.

"Who is the laughing parrot?" he asked, as we headed the column together; changing his question when asked if he desired the nose broken again. "I mean, who is the merry lady?"

I told him.

"M'm," says he. "Well, if 'a thinks to captivate my lord with such frippery as that, 'a won't be merry long. We heard she was a learned woman."

"Need a wise man weep?"

"'A's considered the wiser for it," says the captain. "Man, I tell thee, we have been practised upon by better than this. If she thinks *this* will seduce—"

"Why should she think any such thing?" I asked. "Have we anything to gain from pleasing my lord of Cartesi? I think not."

He rolled his eye at me. He knew.

"Though if we had," says I, pointing secretly at the litter, "meseems we are not so far from its attainment as might be thought."

The captain looked.

"'A's not that kind of man," says he uncertainly.

"Is there," says I, now dimly suspecting that Maria was wiser than the council, "is there more than one kind?"

Indeed, the young duke presented, at that moment, a strange sight for one of his gravity and accomplishments. Riding his high charger at the side of the litter, he was leaning out of his saddle in a way that must have brought grief to his belly muscles, his object being to get his head as nearly as possible inside the curtains of the chair. I now understood why Maria had ordered troop-horses to bear it; mules would have set it too low. And as I thought of this matter, my lady laughed again; moreover, her

fan flashed forth and struck his grace on the cheek-bone!

SHALL I continue with detail, or shall I say merely that this manner of doing continued all the way home; and that, when at last we dismounted in the great courtyard, my lord of Cartesi showed as yet no signs that he was weary of it? A word to the wise is enough; I will add another, to convey that the succeeding two days (his grace's stay with us was to be of that length) brought no change in her ladyship's manner. Toward his highness, I mean. With her father, who most urgently desired to leave his bed and rejoin the world of men, she displayed quite her old self, aggravated. I was present, for instance, when, having decided that Pietro must visit the old man in his bedchamber, she commanded him to be piled with blankets and fur rugs, to stimulate the treatment accorded a quartan ague; this on a day when the sentries were wearing green leaves inside their helmets and fainting on the battlements even so.

That night at dinner, the duke spoke of his departure, and my lady Maria smiled brightly, while knocking over a crystal cup of wine. Without her spectacles, she was a poor judge of distance, and must make two attempts; but Pietro took it as a proof of agitation nevertheless. Such is the vanity of man.

"It was not to be expected that your grace would longer honor our poor court," says she, trembling her voice. "I—I drink to a safe journey."

"Not very heartily, meseems," says Pietro, leaning forward.

"Oh, heartily, heartily," says Maria, smiling more brightly than ever, and biting her lips to make the tears come. "A safe journey for your highness shall be—shall be my daily prayer."

"Er—" says he, using his favorite phrase; but Maria interrupted him. She rose from the table in haste, and put a kerchief to her lips; and I daresay that by candlelight, and to one who had never seen her in her spectacles, and who had no knowledge of women save Greeks, and those dead, she looked very well.

"I—I must be excused," says she

"Keep that fellow here," says he. "Clear the room. Make way, you!"

breathlessly. "Your grace will excuse me."

My opinion of her rose. Her manner of entangling her feet with the chair, until such time as his grace could rise also, was fine art.

Arisen, he looked at me. The servants had withdrawn already; the guard, myself and four men, alone remained.

"Retire," says he, but could not contain himself until we were out of the door. Indeed, just as it closed behind us, I saw from the tail of my eye that he moved toward her; and heard him say "Maria" in a hoarse voice.

Whereupon I visited the Cartesi captain in his quarters for the purpose of laughing, and repaired to the village to tell the baker's wife that I should not be leaving for the campaign after all. . . .

IT WAS certain enough then, in all conscience; it became more certain after his grace had dallied in our midst for a week without sending (I watched him)

(Continued on page 110)

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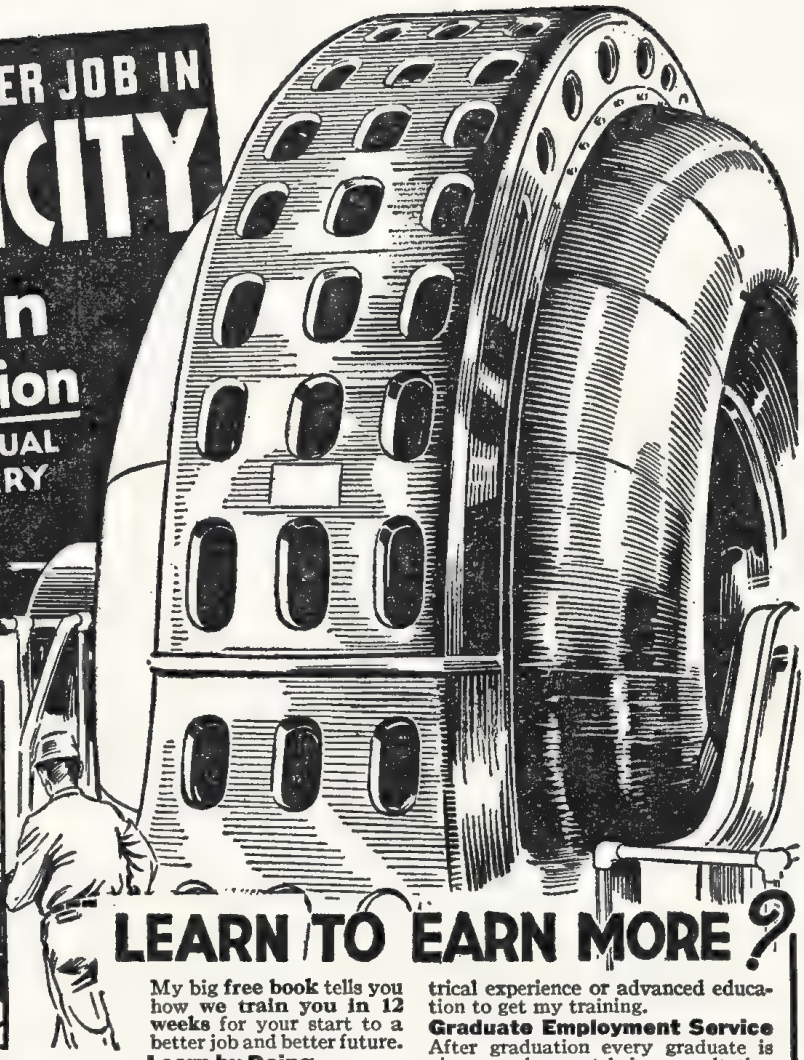

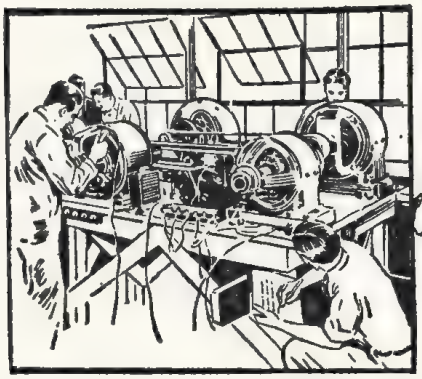

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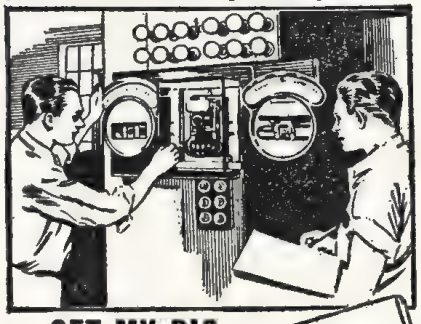

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any message to Beniamino di Fontanelli; who, let it be remembered, was waiting over the frontier with half an army ready to march, and a whole one to feed, for of course Pietro's men would not move without their leader. But certainty was to be made doubly certain. On the eighth day, who should arrive, and who should stalk into the presence of Pietro like a thunder-cloud, but Beniamino himself. He could do this without peril, because we knew nothing, in his opinion, concerning his designs against us.

"We would be alone," says Beniamino through his teeth. "Begone, guardsman."

My lord duke had just come from a walk on the battlements with Maria, and was still dazed. Moreover, he was not in the habit of wearing a sword, and I had some thought that he would need one shortly, so that I hesitated. But he blinked at me in his mild way, and waved his hand confirming the order; whereat I departed—as far as the keyhole.

"What's this?" demanded Fontanelli. "What's this? Why art thou not with me, at the head of thy troops?"

"I have been delayed," says Pietro mildly. "I—er—have been delayed."

"Delayed!" shouts Fontanelli, "And I've been feeding thy damned men! And moreover—"

Withdrawing a pace from this violence, my lord of Cartesi smiled and said something in Latin. Or Greek. Whichever it was, it excited Beniamino to the pitch of frenzy.

"Curse your foreign tongues!" he roars, laying hand to his sword. "There's one word I understand about thee, Pietro. and that's—treachery."

His grace's mouth opened and closed again more firmly than I remembered to have seen it.

"Think that I am not 'ware of thee!" shouts Fontanelli, pointing a finger in his face, " 'Delayed', quotha. And by what? By dallying with yon witless daughter of Girolamo; yon four-eyed—"

He had every right to call the girl four-eyed, from his knowledge of her, and counting her spectacles as eyes—an amusing conceit, which however Pietro did not appreciate. Being without key to the expression, I doubt me he thought this some hint against the lady's virtue, such being the commonest small-change of conversation between gentlemen; and accordingly brought his hand with a resounding smack across Beniamino his mouth.

Of course, I was in the room that very instant. Indeed, Fontanelli had scarce drawn sword before I was at Pietro's side, thrusting sword and dagger into his hands. All I prayed was that he had found time between books to learn something of rapier play; which, I perceived from the first two passes, he had indeed. Not any too much; not by any means as much as Beniamino di Fontanelli; but what he lacked in skill, he more than made up in fury—a by no means bad emotion in a fight, the fencing masters to the contrary notwithstanding. Of course, there are furies and furies; this was the first rage of Pietro's lifetime.

And he had need of all his fury, and his schooling as well, for it was evident that Beniamino di Fontanelli was resolved to kill.

SO RAGING was the young duke, indeed, that had it not been for the dagger he must (taking no care to guard with his longer weapon) have been spitted like a fowl long ere he found his adversary with one of the furious thrusts which he sent toward him. Beniamino's point was at his throat half a dozen times in the first twelve exchanges, and always groped aside at the last instant by that blessed knife. The saints must have been on our side—not before it was time.

I shuddered as I saw Fontanelli slip an inch of steel into Pietro's shoulder, and gasped with relief when I saw that it had reminded that young man he was but mortal. Thenceforth, though he pressed the attack as furiously as before, he guarded with sword and poniard both, and I perceived that he was now clear-headed enough to maneuver for position on the floor.

It was a nice floor to fight on—numerous benches about, of just the right height to catch a man at the back of the knees and cause him to fall. Pietro had selected one, I saw, and was working Beniamino toward it; but old birds are

not caught with chaff; and Fontanelli, I doubt not, had had experience of fighting in houses.

He was a yard from the bench—a foot—and then, covering the turn with a cut, he saw what was behind him. Thrusting to gain time, he leaped over it, and with a shove of his foot sent the bench rolling toward Pietro, who stumbled upon it and fell. And if Beniamino had been less sure of himself, there would have been the end of our young duke, and the beginning of much trouble for us. But the killing seemed so easy that Beniamino lunged for the throat instead of the breast—and missed. Whereupon Pietro rose and fell upon him while yet he struggled to regain his balance, stabbing him lightly on the right shoulder, and with a flailing motion of his sword chopping off his left ear. It may be imagined that Beniamino was not pleased; he was vain of his ears—wore earrings. I remember I sold the ring out of this one for two florins.

And as for Pietro, he seemed to better on the sight of blood. Never saw I so sudden and complete a change in a young man as now came over him, though God wot he had altered greatly since first I saw him at Velletri. He had doubtless read much concerning women, and much concerning blood; without realizing (such is the habit of the bookish) that such things actually existed in the present world. The sight of reality had worked upon him like strong wine upon the unaccustomed—he became, in a manner of speaking, mad.

Even at that period, I was not altogether a stranger to strife, and I assure your lordship that I stared at Pietro with amazement. All that he had heretofore done was as nothing. He beat upon Beniamino's guard something after the manner of a blacksmith with an anvil; he flung his poniard in the poor man's face; and, having at last run him through the shoulder (the same shoulder he had stabbed before) he knocked him down and withdrew the steel by aid of a foot placed on Fontanelli's chest.

Then he threw down the sword, folded his arms, and roared at us. I say us, because of course the noise of fighting had brought half the population of the castle into the corridor, though heretofore I had been too busy to notice them; and I say roared, because that is what he did. Aye, this mild young man, now red in the face and with eyes that would have burned holes in any page they looked at, put back his head and made a noise very like a lion I once heard in the Medici menagerie at Florence. I heard a gasp from behind me; and turned to discover Maria, the cause of all this transformation, with her hands clasped.

"Pietro!" says she, advancing a step or two; and I will not presume to say, having been dazed, at the moment, out of my usual faculties, whether she was acting or no. "What is—"

Whereupon her knees gave way under her, and she fell to the ground, swooning. I was about to do something in the matter of picking her up, when Pietro took charge of that proceeding. He came forward with his nostrils flaring like those of a horse; shoved me a yard backward, and picked her up more easily (despite his wound) than I could have done it. *Ay di mi!*

"Keep that fellow here until I return," says he to me, and meaning Fontanelli. "Clear the room. Make way, you!"

AND returning, he dealt amazingly with Beniamino, not in the least in the fashion one might have expected from a book-learned young man. He demanded the return of his army forthwith, and refused all suggestions that he should pay for its provisions. He renounced the treaty made by his father, and when Beniamino protested, he boxed his remaining ear. And having sent Fontanelli away in a litter (detaining his escort, and substituting one of his own men, headed by the captain who should lead the army back) he stormed upstairs to old Girolamo's room, and announced that he would wed Maria the week following, with or without the old man's consent.

Which he did, with all pomp and circumstance, and that was the end of the peril which had threatened the country. Which being so, Girolamo disbanded the levies, cut down his guard to a skeleton,

and dismissed me—with a florin short in my wages, which I never recovered. And to be brief, I served terms with various small nobles thereafter, at last coming to command the guard of his Grace the Duke of Rometia; that would be in 1552—five years after the marriage of Pietro and Maria. I had been in command about a year when his grace went down-country to negotiate in the matter of our southern frontier; let us say then, 1553, in the spring. And one of the conferences was to be held in the Castle of Cartesi. My master, as senior noble of the assembly, sat at the head of the table; Pietro on his right, and Maria on his left.

And I, as on that night when Pietro had spoken hoarsely to Maria, stood behind them with the guard.

She was wearing her spectacles again.

Moreover, there was a change in Pietro; I could not define it, neither could I understand it; perhaps because I had been too busy, those few years past, to hear much news of politics. I did not know, for instance, that old Girolamo—he was not present because of rheumatism—had become the real leader of Cartesi, as well as of his own domains. Nor that (Maria having proved childless) the succession had been willed to males of her house, notably her cousin, a rat-faced person who sat next but one to Pietro.

The melancholy I perceived on the face of his grace of Cartesi, I attributed perhaps to Maria's appearance. For in addition to the spectacles, she had resumed her manner of clothing—something after the monkish style; ink-stains and all. As the discussion progressed, she leaned forward across the table like a man, and if contradicted ran her fingers through her hair in a most abominable manner.

"In my opinion—" says Pietro, after a long argument which I did not understand. The rat-faced cousin-in-law had been a party to it, and he now arose.

"*Thy* opinion!" he shouted—and he cannot have passed eighteen years. "Who cares for thy opinion? If any is to have an opinion, surely it is my cousin, who hath brought up the duchy to where it stands today; or myself, who—"

Pietro likewise arose. He was unarmed, but he had a large and heavy hand; and I saw his nostrils flare as they had flared over the body of Beniamino di Fontanelli.

"Why, thou pup—" says he, stepping toward the youth with arm uprising.

Aha! Then I understood; and, understanding, marveled. The boy had scarce shrunk before him—which he was wise to do—before Maria had risen from her seat, eyes blazing.

"Coward!" she cried out. "Wouldst strike a boy! Dare to do it! Dare to strike one of my family! Dare to strike—"

And so forward; much of it; all to the same purpose.

Aye, I saw the flare go from his nostrils, and the blaze out of his eyes, to be replaced by a slow blush and a vague expression. Finally the woman thrust him back into his seat, told him not to meddle with what she had in hand, and informed the assemblage that she was now ready to proceed with business again.

They told me in the guard-room that Pietro read his books no longer, but drank instead. No maid was allowed in the palace who was not forty and ill-looking. And, as I have said, he was of no further account in his own place, and publicly known to be so. When drunk, he had complained to his captain that he had been on his way to rule half Italy, but that marriage had lost him even that which he had.

Yet, being freed by the said marriage (as your lordship would be by his) from the necessity of going to war, he looks well able to reach the age of eighty, whereas Beniamino di Fontenilli was killed at Montalvo in the twenty-ninth year of his age.

And who am I to say which was the better off?

It is a matter of taste.

Whereupon I kiss your highness' hands, once more protesting my willingness to serve him even to the point of writer's cramp; and wishing him, if he be fixed thereon, an exception to all the rules concerning marriage.

Subscribing myself humbly,

L. Caradosso.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

WELCOME again to the Writers' Brigade is Fairfax Downey, with his long novelette, "War Horse."

Busy with other writing for other publications, for a number of years he wanted to write this story, out of love for the subject. Finally he got around to it.

Downey says:

It was early in the '20's that I first made my bow at the Camp-Fire. Then, as now, it was with a story of the Field Artillery. Besides my yarns for *Adventure*, I have written eight books (biography, history, light verse) and many articles, verses, and songs. I have worked on the staffs of three newspapers and have been a free-lance since 1928.

Horses and the Army I have known since boyhood. My first mount was a buckskin gelding, given me in 1907 in Cuba where my father, an American officer, was stationed. The war background in this story is drawn from experience. I served with the 12th Field Artillery, Second Division, A.E.F., and later with the 31st F.A. (and I'd volunteer in the present grave emergency, if the War Department should find any use for a rusty, middle-aged veteran). Both my regiments were horse-drawn and armed with 75 mm. guns. There were few motorized outfits in those days. The characters in my story are based on horses and soldiers I knew.

Let no one believe that the war horse is a back number today. The contrary is proved by photographs of German artillery on the march in Poland and France. Many gallons of gasoline were thus saved, and the horses, more vulnerable of course than machines, were protected by German command of the air. Teams can go where tractors cannot, and there's country where you'll find forage and water but never a filling station. Allied purchasing boards began again to buy American horses and mules as in the First World War. Perhaps before this appears in print, our own Remount will be combing Missouri for mules for the pack artillery in the Panama jungles and ordering such round-ups on the Western ranges as launched the mare "Barbara" on her Army career.

NO MAN we knew was more dismayed by the fall of France than Georges Surdez, and no other friend of ours had his own background and sympathies so deeply involved in that military disaster. At the same time, we know nobody who foresaw it so clearly. He told us in advance what was probably going to happen. It seemed astonishing pessimism to hear from him, before Weygand was called, before Belgium tossed up its hands, that Paris would go in a few weeks and the Maginot Line would be evacuated without being used. We thought the war was preying on his mind too much.

Now Surdez has some of the same worries about this country that he had about France. He sees too many uncomfortable parallels. He thinks that what we need is what France needed—and we asked him to give his opinion

at Camp-Fire. Writing the following piece, he called it: "A Voice in the Wilderness."

There were Frenchmen whose sufferings started many years earlier than those of the mass. For they were forced to behold, helpless and despairing, the approach of unavoidable defeat. They knew that France would be beaten to her knees because their warnings were unheeded. That has been the case before. In 1870, before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, the third phase of which now is a closed book through the debacle of the Third Republic in a fiasco even worse than that furnished by the Second Empire, a military attache at Berlin, who had followed the progress of the German Army through the Danish and Austrian wars, warned his government that France could not hope to win. *But weak Governments do not follow the advice of experts.*

In 1931, the *Librairie de la Revue Francaise* published a book by Pierre Faure, bearing the ominous title: TOWARDS A NEW CHARLEROI.

Charleroi has a sinister sound to French ears, for it was at Charleroi that the French Army of 1914, on August 22nd, experimented with the methods devised by the Staff. Infantry, clad in blue coats and scarlet trousers, charged in a solid line, with the bayonet. And the resulting massacre almost collapsed French resistance then and there.

If the ministers of France, the chiefs of her armies, had read and followed the book, history would have been changed. Monsieur Faure told the truth and did not pull his punches.

In his introduction, he writes—in 1931, remember:

"The day is near when, to recover what she has lost, Germany will resort to arms. But what weapons will she call upon to conquer Europe, which escaped conquest in 1914? Many among us fear the realistic spirit of the patient Germans, for recent advances of Science allow them great hopes."

Then he swings into it:

"The lack of foresight of our leaders appear to me as dangerous as the lack of foresight of the leaders we had before 1914.

"The offensive of August 22nd 1914 showed our chiefs what their imagination had failed to grasp: Our soldiers were launched with the bayonet against nests of machine guns and were abominably decimated.

"What can be said of those who had not foreseen that our 75, a *rapid fire* cannon, would need much more ammunition than provided, so that on the 5th of September, in the Battle of the Marne, after but *a few days* of war, our ammunitions were almost finished. Must we recall that Ludendorf wrote in his memoirs: 'If Joffre had had the necessary ammunition, the Battle of the Marne might have become a rout for the German Army, might have ended the war.'

"Those *fundamental* errors, *enormous* errors, almost inconceivable, were perpetrated by men of worth. But those men lived in the past instead of heading their spirit towards the Future.

"One invention is sufficient to change altogether the means of attack and of defense of an entire people. Before 1914, it could have been—it should have been foreseen that the machine gun and the rapid firing cannon *must* totally change the tactics of war.

"Yet we had, at the beginning of hostilities, but five thousand machine guns for the entire French Army, when Germany possessed six times as many. The importance of equipment did not appear until after the battle of Charleroi, and few people had foreseen it. The stabilization of the front allowed the manufacture of the weapons we lacked, but we paid with hundreds of thousands of lives the lack of foresight of our leaders and their lack of creative imagination."

The book is a plea for an increase of the aviation. It describes the different types of planes needed. But the striking passages are in the general considerations in the end chapter. The United States of America, existing under a Parliamentary Government, as a Democracy, is now arming for the future. And the advice that France did not follow, the neglect of which brought her to the greatest humiliation in her history, applies to the U. S. A. perfectly. Monsieur Faure, in 1931, laid his finger on the cause of Allied defeats in 1940.

"The present progress of technic, in all realms, forces the nations who do not want to be surpassed in practical achievements by their neighbors, to study from day to day the necessary progress and the doctrines to be revised.

"That rapidity in evolution forces us, doubtless, to change during the years to come, our present conception of the worth of the various means which we have to protect our territory if need be.

"It seems, more than ever, that the Army, the Navy and the Aviation, whose common goal is the defense of National Territory, should have, at the top of the hierarchy, a staff in common and a budget in common.

"Energies, in all their forms, risk being wasted through the very fact that different branches are under the orders of different chiefs, at the very moment when cohesion in effort and a unified point of view in the conduct of war would make a unified direction necessary.

"The more the means multiply, the more must they be centralized. Could one conceive in war time that there should be a direction of the artillery, a direction of the cavalry, without a *superior* to co-ordinate their use. In other words, without a common chief?

"Consequently, I cannot conceive that one could face modern war with a Ministry of the Navy, a Ministry of War, a Ministry of the Air, acting without common tie, without a *single chief*.

"This lapse in the organization of our military power should be mended by the creation of a Ministry for National Defense, having under his orders, the Navy, the Army and the Aviation."

There was a Minister of National Defense in France, but he was a politician—which Monsieur Faure feared, as indicated:

"But more than ever it should be necessary that those various ministries should have at their heads men likely to remain in place longer than the time between two cabinets changes, for among the mistakes of the present regime, the impermanence of chiefs is the worst. No business, industrial or commercial, could last with as many changes as those to which Ministries are subject today.

"It appears accepted that a minister is useless to keep his ministry running, and that he is charged, merely, with representing 'a party.' The Republican ideal has been betrayed by the base character of certain politicians and it is time to place at the head of each ministry a man likely to give service to his country and not invested with ministerial powers with the sole aim of bringing a few votes to the party in power.

"Those political customs are unfortunately so well accepted by the masses that their disappearance shall call, probably, for the destruction of the regime."

The regime was destroyed, too late to save France. The loud voices of the professional politicians were drowned out, but only by the thunder of German cannon and bombs over the whole of France.

Monsieur Faure takes a couple of swings, in 1931, at the politicians who use peace speeches as a means to a personal end:

"Monsieur Briand does not admit that one may have a different opinion than his on the best way of preserving peace. That habit of sacrificing the most immediate interests of the country to the party spirit is one of the gravest manifestations of the contemporary political abjection.

"Our present politics have ended in isolation for us, tempered only by the alliance with Poland and the Little Entente. Those alliances are not without merit, but they have a reciprocation of duties. *Thus, on the day when Germany shall wish to retake the 'corridor'*

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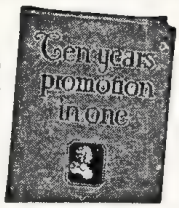

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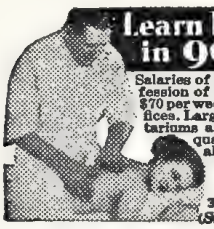

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from the Poles, I don't see how we shall avoid war.

"I leave to those who wish to learn nothing, to forget nothing, the job of stating that "Any war in Europe is impossible from now on.' Monsieur Briand has promised us peace as long as he is alive. That is possible; but Monsieur Briand may die."

And in 1931, years before the Blum regime, Monsieur Faure wrote:

"If Monsieur Blum came to power tomorrow and did not change his ideas on disarmament, he would have to face war very soon. He would say then: 'I did not wish it, I was betrayed by the German socialists.'

"We heard that before—in 1914.

"Even if he were shot by those who would then assume direction of public affairs, the common lot would not be better. It is not enough to execute traitors, it is necessary to combat those traitors of tomorrow today, when they are considered as enjoying freedom of speech."

The last two paragraphs are prophetic:

"If in the few years of respite which separate us from the day when Germany shall feel strong enough to run the chance again we do not make an effort in the direction I have indicated, that is if we do not endow our country with an impressive army of the air, if we do not make up for lost time, I believe, upon my soul and conscience, without party spirit of any kind, that we shall be submitted to an attack without precedent in history by the number of deaths it shall cause, and that we shall surely be vanquished by a people which will make us pay a hundred times over for the Treaty of Versailles.

"It is for those in Power to Choose."

That was in 1931.

French Politicians paid no heed, sabotaged the finest, bravest army in the world. Blum, for instance, did not only allow the aviation to sink way below the proper mark, but his influence weakened in a subtle fashion the general morale of the army. The mistakes have been made, as Faure predicted, but they not only cost the announced hundreds of thousands of French lives—they seem about to cause the loss of an immense colonial Empire. Germany has made the kill, and the jackals have arrived.

The problem in the United States of America today is somewhat different. The need for defense has been admitted, billions have been voted. But the French Chambers admitted the need for defense, voted credits. The Maginot Line alone cost a half billion dollars. The right decision has been reached, yet the mouthings go on. Politicians agree in the main, but delve into fine shadings for the benefit of their party.

It resembles a courtyard full of schoolboys,

arguing and boasting, in contrast with Germany's grim and silent preparations. There is a lot of useless bunk uttered and published, and there is a striking, alarming note: So far, only civilians have talked, about the thousands of planes they could produce and so on . . . and on. But, although everyone must see that divided command, divided responsibility, knocked out France, nothing is being done to find the right man for the top, the right men for his assistants.

Planes, dreadnoughts, tanks, all are useless without direction, the right direction. America, equipped with thirty thousand planes, twenty-five warships of the line, all the tanks produced by our giant manufacturing plants, still would be like a muscle bound, slow thinking colossus pitted against a ruthless, quick-moving, trained prize-fighter.

Separate defense from politics. The defeat of America would be neither Democratic nor Republican.

All speeches now point to the manufacture of equipment to match that of the victorious armies. Right there is the first misconception. To match existing armament is not sufficient. The lessons of this war must be learned. Germany learned much from the Spanish war to help her win this war. Are we to think that she shall be satisfied and will not improve, will have learned nothing more from the long series of experiments in actual application of the principles learned?

Weapons that would match those of Germany today will be obsolete within a year, and the methods for their use will have changed. America must arm not merely to match possible enemies in quality and quantity, but to surpass those enemies in quantity and quality. The speeches call for a copy of others. That again leaves the initiative to the others.

One cannot change the habits of a great nation overnight, one cannot attack sacred principles of free speech. Give the politicians many halls in which to make their speeches, nominate committees of senators and representatives to inspect this or that. Let the talkers talk, since talk they must.

But for America's sake, let a soldier handle the army, a sailor handle the fleet, an aviator direct aviation. And find, in the armed services of the nation, a man, a man who has no party, who is American. A man who is a realist, who will know facts and ignore emotion, who will deal with problems and emergencies not from pride or the wish to put his name in the headlines, but to achieve victory for America. That man exists.

He would keep the nation from going off at half-cock. He would not permit the nation to engage in a conflict too soon, he would not invite disaster. Take a man who will consider the problem as technical, remove him from political influences, let him shoulder the responsibility. Disbar, automatically, any man who is too fond of words. Hitler both talks and acts, but he remains, admittedly, exceptional.

Find a man who will be resolute and ruthless in war, but not rash. Under the present system of service men blindly obeying the orders of civilians, even expert civilians, America may suffer heartbreak and humiliation. A fleet may be sunk, an army shattered.

Find a Man.

BAD NEWS comes from Florida just as we go to press—Talbot Mundy is dead.

At the next Camp-Fire we will publish an account of his life and his stories.

The next issue being our thirtieth anniversary, we had been casting about for one great story from the file of years to print once more for the veteran followers. Inevitably one story has come to mind, and there is now no question of the choice.

Epitaph for Talbot Mundy: the most moving short story *Adventure* ever published—the story he sent us back in 1912 and called "The Soul of a Regiment."

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

CAR camping trip to Mexico City.

Request:—A friend and I are going to take a motor trip to Mexico City next winter. We are going to take our own camping outfit and sleep in a tent. We are going to leave Butte, Montana, about October 1, 1940 and plan to stay about three or four months. I would like to know what kind of equipment we should take, and how much money it will cost us, where are the best places to stay while down there. Is it possible to drive on south of Mexico City and where are the best places to go while down there?

What kind of a permit do we need to have, what is the distance from Butte, Montana, to Mexico City? I am enclosing a self addressed envelope for your reply.

Raymond Moore, Moscow, Idaho.

Reply by Mr. Robert S. Benjamin:—You will find that an automobile trip from Montana to Mexico is both comparatively inexpensive, and very interesting.

From Laredo, Texas, Mexico City is a matter of a few hundred miles and about two or three days if you don't make any extended stop-overs. You'll probably be better off to make Mexico City with the greatest speed and spend your time there and in towns South of Mexico City. In October the rainy season ends down there so you will not be troubled too much with rain in sleeping out. There should be plenty of camping spots, although I would advise your staying in tourist camps, etc., until after you leave Mexico City. Rates for these camps and even for the better hotels in Mexico City are amazingly cheap, $2 to $3 a day including meals is a liberal allowance for your stay in Mexico City at a modern hotel.

When you leave Mexico City southward and set up your tents alongside some little stream (just at the outskirts of a village) you'll be able to buy meat and eggs for almost nothing for your own cooking. Don't eat any *uncooked* vegetables or salads ever, however. South of Mexico City, in the dry reason, the road is passable almost down to Oaxaca if you have a sturdy car and don't mind the jolts. The road is anything but "touristy" and it will take plenty of work—but that is the section for the real sights of native Mexico.

If I were making the trip I would leave my car in a garage in some town such as Cuernavaca or Taxco and rent or buy a burro or two, pack tents and clothing etc. and set out on foot across the Mexican foothills where no roads (auto roads anyhow) go. This is real adventure, and no worry about finding a place to buy gas. A good burro won't cost more than $10 or so. If you were to do this, I'd estimate roughly the cost of your entire trip of four months back to Moscow, at about $200 per person barring unforeseen circumstances as a complete repair job on the car etc. There's not much redtape in entering Mexico as long as you have some money with you. A regulation tourist permit (no passport necessary) costs $1.00 and you have to pay a small fee for registering your car. I think you leave your license at the border. Full information from the Mexican Tourist Information Bureau, Mexico D. F.

FISHING grounds that teem with fish.

Request:—My husband and I wish to take a fishing trip next summer and would like for you to suggest some good fishing grounds, some that are not fished out as so many are.

Are there any such places in the vicinity of Georgian Bay, for example? We should like to be able to motor to such a place.

E. K. Dickey, Walkerville, Ontario.

Reply by A. D. L. Robinson:—Your letter just to hand. Do I know of any good fishing grounds not so fished out. Well, rather! Two friends and I took a trip last summer to Manitoulin Island on Georgian Bay, which, by the way, is the largest fresh-water island in the world. The Island is cut up into many lakes, some of them leading into the Bay and all of them practically virgin fishing grounds. I wish I had a snap to send you of a catch of fish made in two hours one afternoon while we were there, by an American from Pittsburgh. He could verify my story of a string of about fifty fish, pickerel, pike and bass which he caught and was very proud of. Every day there were such catches. It is a fisherman's paradise. Lake Manitou, in which these fish were caught, is only one of many lakes where fish are caught by the tourists who know about the Island. I might mention that the summer resort of Rockville is where we stayed.

Another place that is teeming with fish is at Blind River, in the Algoma District on the north shore of North Channel, part of Georgian Bay. I know men who drive up there every summer and come back loaded with fish. To get there from Toronto, it would be well to motor north to Tobermory at the north end of Bruce Peninsula. From there you would take the boat (rates reasonable) to Manitoulin Island, then motor the 40 miles north across the Island until you came to Little Current. Roads on the Island are good. At Little Current you take a ferry that in five minutes lands you on the mainland from where you motor through an exciting 38 miles to Espanola, then turn west and drive some 100 miles (not sure of the distance, as I have never been there) to Blind River. Another good fishing ground is the French River, on Georgian Bay, northeast, and its tributary, the Pickerel River. But I recommend most the two above places, particularly Manitoulin Island, where there are delightful cabins in which to stay, and the Rockville Lodge where you get good food.

I was surprised, when there, not to find more American tourists. In all Canada, I know of no such charming spot as Manitoulin Island.

BASEBALL'S sign language.

Request: What are the proper symbols to use on a baseball score card, and on what are individual averages based?

What is the greatest number of runs scored in one inning by an individual team within the past fifteen years? The most number of runs in a game?

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You may send me the 8 big NEW books and binder of shop tickets for free examination. I will pay the few cents delivery charges only, unless I decide to keep them in which case I will send $2.00 in ten days and $3.00 per month until the total price of only $34.80 is paid. If I return them in 10 days I will owe you nothing. Because I send now you agree to give me a membership in the American Technical Society entitling me to consulting privileges with any of your experts for one year.

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Address.....
Please attach a letter stating age, occupation, employer's name and address and that of at least one business man as reference.

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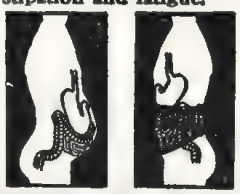

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29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95
31x4	2.95	1.25
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

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Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95
33x5	3.95	1.75
34x5	4.25	2.25
32x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	4.45

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65
6.50-20	4.45	1.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95
ALL OTHER SIZES		

Size	Tires	Tubes
33x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.65
33x5	3.75	1.75
35x5	3.95	1.75

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.65
38x7	10.95	4.65
36x8	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	4.95

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	8.95	4.95
9.00-20	10.95	5.65
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

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SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct **5 per cent** if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

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CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 15, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

—Frank J. Curley, Staten Is., N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Frederick G. Lieb:—It is difficult to write out all the symbols that are used in scoring on a score-card. I have written a booklet, "How to Score." It contains all symbols, etc. It is sold by Sporting News, St. Louis, Mo., for 25 cents.

Individual batting averages are arrived at by dividing the total number of official times at bat into the number of hits. In fielding averages you divide the total number of chances into chances accepted (putouts plus assists).

The record books do not show the most number of runs scored by a team in the past fifteen years; they show only the record for modern baseball, which is 14 runs in one inning by the 1920 Yankees and 1922 Cubs.

The modern record for most runs in a game comes within your fifteen year period. The Cardinals defeated the Phillies, 28 to 6, July 6, 1929, (one team record). Record for entire game last fifteen years (Chicago, A. L., 21; Philadelphia, A. L. 14).

PUT AN end to Scottie Itch.

Request:—I'd like to get some information concerning my Scottie. She is about a year and a half old, and just as soon as warm weather started this Spring, the same skin disease started on her that she had last summer. I've taken her to three or four vets and they all give me different advice. One told me there was no cure for the disease and that all Scotties had it in the hot weather. They all give me a sticky ointment to put on her and then it gets dirty and seems to irritate her more. One said bathe her in salt water. Then I read that salt water would irritate her even more.

I use a pure Castile soap on her in her bath and yet she has a strong odor the very next day.

I'll certainly appreciate any information you can send me to help her.

—Mrs. E. P. Dismukes, Jr., Chickasaw, Ala.

Reply by "Ozark Ripley" Thompson:—From your description and odor of dog's malady, I feel sure that she is suffering from chronic sarcoptic mange. The chronic part comes in because doubtlessly she beds in places which have not been disinfected and of course no matter what you do the mange mite enters her system again.

First of all give the dog five drops Fowler's Solution of Arsenic twice a day, keep it up for sixty days at least. Destroy all old bedding. Put dog on diet composed of two-thirds meat and balance mostly vegetables and very little cereals.

You have to submit once more to a greasy application, but previous to applying give dog a bath in warm water to which one of the small packages of baking soda have been added. When dry apply thoroughly the following ointment, letting no part of body but the eyes and inside of ears escape. One quart olive oil, 2 ounce boracic acid, 2 ounces silycillic acid, 2 ounces powdered alum, 2 ounces sulphur, I tablespoonful iodine, 2 ounce turpentine. Rub in dog's coat thoroughly. Give dog a clean place in which to roll after application, repeat every three days until cured, which she will be if you faithfully administer prescription as advised.

HERE'S one for the sourdoughs to hold a meeting over. A lot of tobacco juice could be shot in this discussion.

Request:—I am curious to know the origin of the word *mush* as used by dog drivers in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. My understanding is that it is the word of command to the dogs to get-going whether they are being driven by white, breed or Indian drivers.

The word is common in Jack London's Alaska yarns and in all western or northwestern fiction. I have heard it invariably at the dog-races at Ashton, Idaho, which I attended on several occasions, and on the part of stray dog-drivers who drop in on Chicago for exhibition purposes. The expression is also common in Idaho for two or more people to say—"Well, let's mush along."

Webster's International says it is a corruption of *MARCHONS* from the French and was used by the old Courieurs de Bois as a cry to their dogs, but I still don't see how they got MUSH out of this—especially when it appears to be in general use by English, French, Indians and all nationalities who drive dogs.

Maybe you can help. Hope I am not imposing too much.

—Hugh B. Tabb, Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Frank Winch:—Sourdoughs of the candle light era should go for this one plenty much. ALL of them no doubt can give you the *real* origin of the word—mush—and it's more than possible no two will agree. Possibly as you say (according to Webster's International—*MUSH* is a corruption of *Marchons* from the French and was used by the old Courieurs de Bois as a cry to their dogs).

I incline to the belief that its parentage comes closer to the Chinook Indians who use the word "MAHSH." True, this may have come from the French, Marche, Marcher, etc. It is a fact that the French originated most of the Chinook Wawa—words being selected that could be easiest pronounced by both whites and the Indians.

"Mahsh" pronounced with a broad "A" like mash with an ah sound for the A is one of the big important words of "command." Among the meanings are: to leave, to turn, to get out, to throw away, expel, remove, extinguish, heave, hurl, spill, spend, dismiss, etc.

"Mahsh" to a dog means "get out." When the sourdoughs found need for dogs they acquired the first ones from Indians and the dogs knew that mahsh meant for them to get going. The "ah" sound was soon corrupted to "uh" and all American drivers yell "Mush" at their huskies.

You may accept this version until your letter appears in print. And you'll dern soon know after that if the dope is correct, if and when the old timers glue an eye hold on this piece. Trust the sourdoughs to mix-up a pan of dough that will have plenty to it. Especially—pan—for this writer, if I'm wrong!

SETTLING in the South Sea Islands.

Request:—I plan to spend a year or two in the South Sea Islands, probably the island of Moorea. If I like the life, I'll spend the remainder of my years there. I shall have about four hundred dollars. I wish to live as nearly as possible as the natives do, obtaining food and shelter from the natural resources. Is that possible for a healthy man?

What qualifications are necessary to enter the islands?

Do I have to get permission from the French?

I've read that Meheetia, sixty miles east of Tahiti, is uninhabited in spite of an abundance of fruit and coconuts and fish, etc. Is this true?

What language would be best? Are the natives friendly?

Is hunting with firearms permitted? Where could I obtain information about government regulations?

—B. A. Meredosia, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Wm. McCreadie:—Moorea is a lovely island and as it is merely twelve miles from Tahiti it is a favorite resort for tourists. First of all to take up residence in any part of the French Oceania possessions one must have a passport vised by a French consul at port of embarkation. Then it is advisable to have a certificate of character from the Mayor or Chief of Police of your town, and also a certificate of health from your doctor. I may say that *all* Island gov-

ernments—British, French and American are particular as to the health and character of new arrivals. To settle in any French island you want to apply on arrival at Papeete for a permit to settle from the Governor if granted you pay a "de sojour" tax of 500 francs with an annual renewal of 25 francs. The French do not encourage Europeans (as all whites are so called in the Pacific), and to play safe they ask that you deposit a sum sufficient to pay your return fare back home. With the French this sum is deposited with the steamer agents at port of leaving, forwarded to Tahiti Government and returned on your departure, or earlier if you prove a desirable citizen.

Mehetia is a small island, as you say, about 60 miles from Tahiti. It is mostly owned by whites and only occasionally visited by fishermen. To settle there the best plan would be to get to Papeete and make inquiries there, find an owner and make arrangements to lease his land. While French is spoken, many speak English and in any case one can always speedily learn a pigeon lingua France. The natives are all civilized and well behaved. How friendly depends upon how one treats them. I have never had any trouble with them. Hunting with firearms is allowed if you can find anything to hunt. To take a gun ashore you pay a gun tax of 10 francs and if you wish to shoot game a further tax of 50 francs (game tax) is required. I should advise you to write to the Secretary of the Administration, Papeete, Tahiti for all further information.

I hope all this will prove useful to you and wishing you much good fortune in your quest.

AT LAST—new training ships for a living on salt water.

Request:—In a recent magazine article about the expansion program of the Merchant Marine it was stated that the government is operating training schools to train men to become merchant seamen. According to this article the training consists of six months on board ship, three months at a shore station, and three months on a Coast Guard Cutter.

I would like to know the qualifications for enrollment in these schools, the number of schools now in operation, and any other information that would be of interest.

—William S. Carnes, Independent, Mo.

Reply by Mr. Gordon MacAllister:—To become eligible for admittance to one of the Maritime Service training schools, a candidate must have served at least two years at sea in one capacity or another. There is not stated age limit or educational requirement.

At present there are two schools, one at Hoffman Island in New York Harbor, the other at Government Island in San Francisco Bay. There has just been completed an officers' training school at New London, Conn. And at St. Petersburg, Florida, a new unit for training the apprentice seamen is now being constructed. In conjunction with these several stations, there are several training ships, including the *American Seaman* and the *Joseph Conrad.*

Pay for unlicensed men begins at $36 a month. Transportation to the station, quarters, meals, and uniforms are furnished without charge. After the first two months of training, unlicensed men who are qualified may be advanced in grade and pay.

I assume from your letter that you have had no previous sea experience, therefore, I would suggest that you write directly to the U.S. Maritime Service, Washington, D. C. for information concerning the qualifications for entrance to their new apprentice training station at St. Petersburg. As yet, I have received no information, since it is still in its embryonic state.

THE WHITE RIVER "canoe" that's built of planks.

Request:—Will you kindly advise where I can obtain plans for building a small boat commonly called a "canoe" on the lower half of White River in Indiana? The following description of the boat is the best I can do, but I hope it will be clear enough to identify the type:

Constructed of planks and large enough to carry three safely. Bow and stern of same shape, narrow but not pointed. Bottom of boat from bow to stern curved. Bottom of boat across the beam straight. Boat is usually pushed by paddle but may also be rowed successfully. Boat is the result of native development in water that is swift but has no rapids.

P. I. Newson, Springfield, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—I've tried to find my notes on the "Tennessee river cunner" which I think is the same as the "White river canoe" you describe.
If you will write to Walter Chansler
c/o Outdoorsman
Columbus, Ohio.
he can send you the plans you need, or a working description. He wrote THE RIVER TRAPPER, an account of White River houseboating and built his own boats, for paddling, poling, fishing, trapping, etc.

I've seen these canoes 18 feet long, 24 inches wide and 10 or 12 inches deep—single boards along the sides and cross boards for bottom planking. But though the river men stand up in them and paddle, they were too tippy for me.

They are simply a long, narrow scow, with rakes at bow and stern, and thwart-seats on bow and stern. Chansler will tell you about the best model, safest to use. He usually used a johnboat, "square" at bow and stern, and sides flaring out.

Try Richard K. Wood, North Chattanooga, Tennessee. He makes blue-prints of the various river craft and he used the canoe of the Holstoin river country. This canoe, like the lower White river canoe developed along the Ohio Tributaries when the impatient frontiersmen replaced the Indian dugouts with board-canoes, the Indians using solid tree-trunk logs,—probably the tippiest of craft, till one learned how to use it. Wood probably has a lot of photographs of the mountain board cunners, canoes, as he is the best professional I know, covering wildcrafting, professional outdoormen, etc.

A GERMAN trick in the World War saved their fleet at Jutland.

Request:—In the Naval Battle of Jutland in the first World War, the German Admiral saved his fleet by executing an evolution which naval experts had stated was impossible during battle. Will you please explain what this maneuver was?

Is there any publication obtainable describing the strategy and tactics of that war?

—H. V. Hanson, Seattle, Wash.

Reply by Major F. W. Hopkins:—Regarding the battle of Jutland—I'll try to give you what information I can. The German maneuver you refer to was not "impossible," although it had not been done before and was considered to be hazardous and impracticable. However, of course, it is now "in the book." At about 6:45 p. m. the German fleet under Scheer was heading in a Northeasterly direction, engaged in a fight with the British Battle Fleet which was to the east—when suddenly the destroyers of the Germans made a sortie against the British out of the smoke and gloom. Meanwhile the Germans made a complete reversal of direction by turning each ship about almost upon its own wake—this maneuver being obscured by the smoke, gloom and rays of the setting sun—and stood off to the westward, then swung south and east again in a long curve, by column, and just before 7 p. m. again engaged the British, who were

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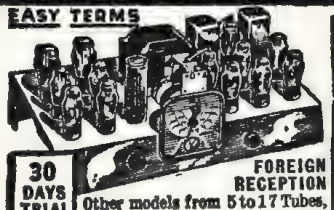

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again to the east and still heading south. At about 7 the destroyers again raced out of the smoke in a dashing attack, and the German Battleships again made a reverse or "U" turn—and by 7:45 were lost in the gathering dark and out of reach of the British. Total night fell at 9 p. m. There was no further contact.

B. H. Liddel-Hart, "The Real World War, 1914-1918" (You will find it in the Public Library), has a good account of this battle, and a diagram.

THIS reader is bound for Alaska to trap mink.

Request:—I am twenty-five years of age and I plan to go to Alaska in about six months. I intend to trap, hunt and fish. I plan to build a cabin near the Yukon district and trap for the famous Yukon mink. What would be the best means of transportation to this point? Where can I secure a good map of Alaska? Which is the best month in which to build a cabin?

I know taxidermy and intend to mount many specimens. Could I secure a dog team at one of the Alaska towns or possibly in Canada? What would be the price of a good team? Can I get most of my kit in Alaska, and what would you advise me to take from here?

—Charles Dion, Minneapolis, Minn.

Reply by Mr. T. S. Solomons:—The central Yukon region is most accessible by the Alaska Railroad from Seward to Tanana, which is the terminus nearest the main Yukon. River boat would take you down the Tanana to the Yukon. The other route is from Skagway by the White Pass and Yukon railroad and the Yukon river boats at White Horse down to Dawson (Canada) and on through American territory to and past the mouth of the Tanana. Or, of course you could boat down the Yukon. Write the Geological Survey for maps.

A cabin is best built about August, unless you can put one up very quickly in September. Early in October, usually, it gets pretty cold, with often some early snow. In mounting animals you run up against certain regulations, especially in sending them out. You had better get all the dope from the Alaska Game Commission, Juneau, Alaska, first, before planning.

All temperate and Arctic furs are found in Alaska. Northern United States and Southern Canada furs are usual. The mink and other furs are, of course, choicer in Alaska, as a rule because the climate is colder; but central and southern Alaska is an exception

in this respect to central Canada, as to temperature. That is, parts of Canada are just as cold or colder. You can usually pick up a dog team nearly anywhere in Alaska, and it is usually best to buy practically all of your requirements locally. They have what experience has shown to be best adapted to that region. A dog team might cost you thirty or forty dollars as a minimum or five times that if you went in for a fine sled and choice, tried dog flesh.

If you decide definitely to go, send for the government publications (Depts. of Interior and Agriculture, Wash., D. C.) covering what you are interested in and decide where you want to go. Then write me again and I'll give you a list of articles suited to that region. Be sure and tell me how long you expect to outfit for.

ANOTHER plan to settle on an island —here's an interesting island in the West Indies.

Request:—I am interested in colonization by a group of about twelve to twenty-four families. Would prefer an island either in the Caribbean section or off either coast of Central America.

This venture will include a doctor and a dentist and we intend to start a semi-agricultural colony. Any sources of further information that you may think helpful would be appreciated as we intend to plan carefully. I understand most other such tries have ended in failure.

—K. Polenz, San Diego, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Robert Spiers Benjamin:—You've given me a long order, to suggest a possible island for colonization for, as you say yourself, most such tries have resulted in failure.

About a year and a half ago, I made my most recent trip through the West Indies, and visited most of the smaller less inhabited Island groups, including several inhabited only by two or three families—such as Inagua, Rat Island, etc., where "colonizers" are still holding out. You may have read recently where one group finally gave up in disgust and returned home.

But I did find one island where, the thought struck me, a group of Americans might be able to live. That island is St. Martin, just north of the Windward Island group, and just overnight south of the U. S. Virgin Islands. The island is roughly eight or ten miles long, a few wide, and it has an unusual ownership—combined French and Dutch rule. There are two small, picturesque towns on St. Martin—one French, the other Dutch. It was said that when the island was originally settled by the French and Dutch an argument about ownership resulted. It was agreed that there would be a settlement based on a foot race. A Frenchman would start from one end of the island, a Dutchman from the other. Where they met would be the boundary between their ownership. The crafty Dutchman (who had already explored the island) started out from the best point on the island and when he met his French competitor a while later, it was discovered that the Dutch had secured the most fertile, productive half of the land. So much for its history; very few ships get into the island with the exception of an occasional freighter of the Ocean Dominion Line (17 Battery Place, N. Y.).

The most convenient way to reach St. Martin is by chartered schooner from French Guadaloupe, or from the U.S. Virgin Islands. I know of no definite place on which to get information about the place other than the French Consul General, French Building, Rockefeller Center, N. Y., or possibly from the U. S. Consul, Basse Terre, Guadaloupe, French West Indies. I believe that land is very cheap there and there is undoubtedly plenty of it.

Most of the population is Negro—probably about twenty white French, and equal number of Dutch. The Governor of the French part of the island, Howard Fleming, is an acquaintance of mine.

The French port has a quaint little harbor; there's plenty of good fishing nearby—you can buy lobsters for practically nothing. The soil is not very fertile, but with effort your colony can probably coax some vegetables out of it. There is some cattle on the island. Governor Fleming is said to have one of the best herds of cattle in the West Indies, all brought over by schooner from Guadaloupe.

Now remember, I'm not praising St. Martin to the skies as a West Indian Paradise—but I have a faint suspicion that one of these "American colony ideas" might work there where it has been an utter failure elsewhere. If your party is well financed it would certainly pay to have one or two delegates go by Pan-American Airways to Guadaloupe, or to St. Croix, Virgin Islands, charter a small schooner and inspect the place. You'll probably find that it is necessary to go there in order to get the most accurate information on land, etc. . . .

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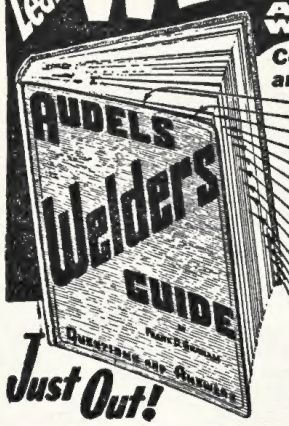

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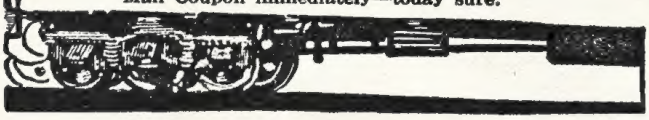

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son ave., Hollywood, Calif.

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Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 40 Chapel St., Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks*, New York.—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **4** *New Jersey.*—F. H. BENT, 81 Church St., Fair Haven, N. J. **5** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure*. **6** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

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